SIGNET

QUEENS UNIVERSITY ARTS AND LITERARY MAGAZINE

2023

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QUEENS UNIVERSITY ARTS AND LITERARY MAGAZINE

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Hedgehog Ring
Ana Garay

Faculty Advisor
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Greetings Readers!

By reading this creative magazine, you are taking part in a decades-old tradition here at Queens: the publication and celebration of our own student's creative work. Every piece in this collection was created by one of your fellow students, and is a showcase of their skill, hard work, and creativity. We hope you enjoy reading, viewing, and listening to everything that this community has made, just as much as we have enjoyed putting it all together here. The hard work this magazine takes is always worth the joy it provides to our campus and everyone on it.

A big thanks goes out to everybody who helped get this book made, from the genre editors and readers on our staff, to our faculty advisor, to the graphic design team that made it presentable, and to everyone who submitted their work. It's your commitment that made publishing this year possible.

Thank you for your support, and we hope to see your work in next year's edition!

Sincerely,

Emily DeAugustino, Connor Lindsay, Jenna Plaisted

Hello Readers,

On behalf of the members of the GDN 215 editorial design class of 2023, we want to first give a big thank you to those who have decided to pick up this year's copy of *Signet*. We strove to design a magazine that satisfied not only the editorial team but also the reader. Every decision from the cover to the point size was carefully made in order to curate a book that reflects the creativity, hard work, and excellence found in Queens students.

A large portion of thanks must also go to Professor Gamez, who was a constant anchor of support and assistance throughout the entire process.

Peace and Love,

Emily Walter and Allison Morton

Signet Hedgehog History

Before this magazine was called *Signet*, it had many names. From 1917 until 1919, it was called *The Princess*. After alternating from *The Scepter* and *The Queens Blues*, it was called *The Queens Quill* from 1939 until 1942. This name had some variations through the years, such as *The Quill* (1944-51), *The Blue Quill* (1951-1957), and then *The Quill* (1957-1959). During this time, the magazine had a small hedgehog mascot. This year, the editorial design team paid homage to the latter by designing a hedgehog on a signet ring.

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Spotlight Interview: Melinda Harper

Meriam Vancerchin

This year's *Signet Spotlight Interview* is with Dr. Melinda Harper, a professor and the Chair in the Queens Psychology Department. Dr. Harper is the director of the Queens T2U program, a transitional group that supports first-year students on campus. She is being interviewed by Meriam Hancerchin, a Signet staff member and our Poetry Genre Editor, on the importance and impact of the T2U program.

Meriam: Hi Dr. Harper, it's so nice to finally meet you and it's an honor to be able to interview you for this portion of our upcoming Signet Magazine. I understand that you're the founder of the T2U, and I want to firstly ask, what is the T2U Program?

Harper: Thank you for having me, it's a pleasure! So yes, the acronym stands for the "Transition 2 University", we started it back in I believe 2006, and it is primarily a first-year student program designed to help first-year students make the transition from high school to college. Research shows that the first semester of stepping foot on a college campus can be pretty impactful and there really is nothing else like it simultaneously; academically, socially, even the ability to practice independent self-care. It really comes to a head the first fall semester of your freshman year.

So we started T2U to help support our first-year students in that transition and in the early iterations it was just a fall program, they met one night a week for the first eleven weeks of school for about an hour to an hour and a half. These first-year students meet with two upper class leaders and they have session topics that correspond with where they are in the fall semester. Over the years it was so popular and so well received that it came to our attention that our fall semester groups were meeting on their own in the spring! They were just continuing through and so a couple years into the T2U program we developed a spring version as well and so that's what people will see and know. Now there are meetings in the fall and the groups continue

forward in the spring with topics that correspond to the spring semester.

As T2U grew in popularity we opened it up to transfer students and international students and in the spring semester we give sophomores, juniors, and seniors the chance to come back to T2U if they wanted to join again. We've been pretty fortunate and blessed that our groups fill every year, it's a pretty powerful and inclusive community building experience. In any given group it could be student athletes, international students, and transfer students, and outside of a class I'm not sure what else there is in terms of just social interactions and hanging out where these kids can come together one night a week and get to know each other, become friends, and have something in common in that way, so it's really cool.

As a social scientist, we know it works. Very early on, we were tasked with exploring how T2U impacts our students and just year after year after year, our empirical data was showing Queens students who did T2U, compared to Queens students who elected to not do T2U, do better academically and socially, and even psychologically, and have less homesickness, less depression, and they're more likely to retain. They're less likely to transfer and they're more likely to come back and get involved in Queens.

M: Thank you for giving more insightful information about the program. I was familiar with this program, but I didn't know what it was really about and that it is an amazing achievement and accomplishment! What was the inspiration to start this program, and what are some of the benefits?

H: It really was just a fortuitous moment, I was attending a Society for Research on Child Development conference my first spring here as a first-year professor, and I was listening to this presentation by Dr. Mark Pancer and his colleagues out of Canada. They were talking about peer support groups as part of the first-year experience. I was sitting there listening to their development and their research and it was just like a light bulb went off and I came back to Dr. Chris Allegretti, she's my colleague who has since retired and she was our department chair at the time, and I said hey, I have an idea! At the time, Queens as a whole was really interested in student

retention, what helps our kids here, what keeps them happy, why do they keep coming back, and one of the things we know is that when people are socially connected, they become more and more emotionally invested in their community and the experience and becoming a Queens student.

I have been so lucky that the psychology department and the College of Arts and Sciences and the Queens administration allowed me and Dr. Allegretti to start this project. We started with three T2U groups in the beginning, so just six leaders and about 8 to 10 first-year students, and the group at its maximum growth has been sixteen groups, 32 leaders, and an average of almost 180 first-year students participating in T2U every week. Almost a third of the incoming first-year class voluntarily want to do this and to meet each other and talk and get to know each other! Now I have ten groups and all of our ten groups are full! It's a leadership experience, so my leaders receive internship credit, business credit, or psychology credit, and they really learn how to lead and how to do group dynamics. I think the benefit is twofold here, we're supporting these new students and my leaders are gaining applied real practical experience that they can take into the workforce. I felt so lucky we tapped into something and we open it up and every year it just fills in!

M: That sounds very inspiring, the more I hear about this program the better it gets! How do you see the T2U program in the next five years or so?

H: Oh goodness, if I had the resources it would be cool if every year there's a sophomore T2U, junior T2U, or senior T2U that supports seniors as they're navigating their final year and preparing for the transition to the workplace! The athletic department, pre-pandemic, expressed interest in doing an athlete T2U because student athletes have a unique experience balancing the athletic responsibilities with being a student. What if they're injured and their athletic performance is not what they expected it to be? Being guided by upper class leaders could be really powerful and helpful to them.

What we remain challenged by is just resources and energy. I'm a singular person and I still do teach my classes, and I'm the department

chair now, so we do what we can in our little bubble. My leaders who have graduated and gone to graduate schools have taken their books with them and have set up their own version of T2U at their graduate programs. Now that is so cool! The more and more that we can create a social community and engagement, the more people are happier and invested in each other and I just love the idea of that.

M: That is amazing, thank you. The amount of impact that this program has on students here at our very own university is a huge accomplishment and I can't wait to see how this program cultivates in the upcoming years. What is the internship program within T2U? How does it benefit the students who are involved in this program?

H: We are so thrilled and pleased that the Vandiver Center supports us as an applied internship. Students can receive credit for Internship 401 and 402 by serving as a leader. They meet the whole 86 hours of requirement and my leaders participate in a variety of weekly meetings and experiences that mimic if you were in a business or corporation project management meeting. It is team leading with your peer group of managers, and then the practicum is the hour to an hour and a half in the evenings leading a T2U group. There are no adults in the room, it's just the two leaders and a group of kids, so when my interns leave this internship they will know how to lead a group and steer in the direction of a topic, a task, an activity, or discussion with an outcome.

My leaders are responsible for presenting every week, so they walk away with very strong oral skills in terms of oral presentations, and they're responsible for weekly process notes and writing up weekly reports linking what happened in the evening to the concepts that we were learning in our meetings. The internship is this live experience of what you might have to do in the business world or even most analogous to something like a hospital round. The skills are incredibly transferable when it comes to communication, leadership, and oral speaking. It's just awesome!

M: Would you recommend this to students who are majoring in psychology?

H: Absolutely, and we are open to all majors! For example, I've got history majors, and I have an exercise physio major, and I think what they're wanting to learn are those different skill sets and take that into their discipline. Especially in psychology, it is one of the more unique opportunities of having a face to face and intimate discussion. The privacy and the report between my leaders and their group members become like a mini family, and students say they have two parents here on campus. It's the cutest thing, especially for psychology majors who might be interested in a clinical experience. We might be the closest someone could get to doing something like that.

M: And how does this help enhance each student's degree in psychology?

H: When it comes to a course in Group dynamics, where we learn different concepts of group formation and cooperation of in-Group versus out-Group dynamics, we learn all these concepts in a class, but the best way to learn is to actually see it live. To actually lead a group and see that exchange of two kids leaning over and doing side conversations while the rest of the group is talking about something else. For a psychology major, they get to hear and learn these concepts in the class and then actually have the opportunity to practice it and not just sit back and memorize and regurgitate for an exam. My course actually has no rigorous exams, what is rigorous is when two T2U co-leaders ask a very important and meaningful question to 8 to 10 first-year students and nobody answers it. Ten pairs of eyes look at my leaders and my leaders have to learn the skills to navigate that, which is very similar in therapy. If I ask a question of my client and my client is pretty resistant or defensive to responding to it, I'm kind of stuck for 45 minutes, thinking, how do I help this person? It makes you think on your toes and learn how to steer the room dynamically in a different way to get that client to trust you. It's so real in its ability to bring all of these concepts to life.

M: From hearing what you've been talking about, your program is about enhancing more practical steps instead of the typical reading and memorizing something from paper. This is more of a "this applies it to this and this applies to

that"- it offers practical steps on how to become a better leader.

H: Yes, and this program is also about giving back! Part of our motto and our mission is that these leaders mentor these young people in a way that gives back to our community, so our young people want to stay and they want to get involved. I hear my first-year group members saying "I want to be a T2U leader", and that's great because that means they see themselves as a junior or senior doing that here on campus, so I think it offers a meaningful service as well.

M: It truly does and it's amazing seeing how young people come together to serve their community and give back to their community. I think this program is heavily positively impacting them in those areas of their lives. To close this interview, I want to ask you, because Queens is pushing forth so much diversity, I'm curious as to how this program encourages more diversity? How does this program make a pathway for a more diverse culture within the program and at Queens as a whole?

H: I think if you surveyed or interviewed any of our current leaders or past leaders you will see diversity right in front of you! These leaders have not only such strong social skills, I choose leaders intentionally that represent every culture, to the best of my ability, and every possible college student. I myself was a first generation college student, so I have first generation students who are leaders, and I want my first-year student T2U members to see something of themselves and to see that as a peer mentor or role model they can aspire to. We have topics explicitly about diversity; different religions, different backgrounds, and the challenges of financial differences. Some young people in their first-year peer group want to go out all the time, but you might be a first-year student that has more financial need, challenges, or responsibilities. Hearing those differences is important and brings a level of awareness and empathy to each other. In our topics we intentionally focus on diversity issues, and every session has a check-in session, an activity and then a wrap up. In the activity, the hope is that these members walk away feeling informed, empowered, and supported, so they know that there are resources

on campus and options in the Charlotte community. We're just so intentional about diversity in our dialogue, every session is inclusive and it's welcoming of different opinions. I encourage students to tell me about their different backgrounds and how it relates to the topic because I want everyone to feel welcome and included and let them know that this is space for them. That is why kids show up every week and it's so great!

POETRY

Dereliction

Tyler Barnette

Even on the worst
nights, I want to know you're
there for me. Instead, all
I receive is callous apathy.

I look to the garden of
my mind, where peace is hard
to find. Trace the lines I
walk between: Son, & Human Being.
But now, through blurred vision,
I can't tell if the grass remains green,
or if the garden's become dark and twisted.
Please—grant me reprieve.

Are you proud, my Progenitor?
This is the bed you've made, now
I'm forced to lay in this pain
you orchestrate. You hoist yourself
upon imaginative pedestals, oh
King of Nothing. You abdicate,
leaving me to this twisted
Malediction. A slave to a fate,
A pain unwanted: this Dereliction.

This pain is all I have
left. It festers, clawing at
my sanity. The Fear, it
feeds, stolidity becoming the
animal that seeds. What am I to do,
except feel nothing?

There were days I cried for you,
days I felt worlds away,
I just wanted you to
Stay. Stay with me. Instead
I was met with reverberant dial tones,
God damnit, pick up the phone.
I can't.

I cannot continue this cycle of
nonchalance, this indifference
It makes my soul rot. But
you don't care.
You'd make the effort
if you did. Alas,
I am forced to cope.
to bury myself
in your absence.

Misery and Mourning

Megan Biesecker

The Nave of Nightmares begins with a sin-
gle scream, the calamitous choir warbles
their whimpering wisdom. Listen, listen.
Listen closely to their genius garbles.
Monsters and mysteries all misnomers,
they dance, prance, glance down the aisle to watch Death
preach on their putrid pulpit. None calmer,
the congregation takes their final breath.

So, Misery, dearest friend of mine: let
black blood bleed from absent eyes; let them whine
from throats raw with fire, no longer a threat;
let us delight in these lost souls enshrined.
With figures muddled in mist and shadow,
swallow your fear—we head for the gallows.

things i can't wait to ask you.

(after Helga Floros's "things i want to ask you.")

Megan Biesecker

i want to ask you what god feels like. is it the kiss of sunlight on your cheeks or my fingers inside you or the burn of a good hit? i want to ask you if there are things you regret, people you've hurt. i want to tell you everything i've done. what's your favorite fruit? mine's pineapple—and no, that's not what i mean when i say that. do you still get panic attacks when you drive? i've never felt safer with you. what will we look like when we're old together, in a cottage or a bookstore or the grave? i want you to watch me cry: when i'm most alive in a car with my favorite song, when i hear just another thing on the news, when i finally tell the truth. and when the snot pools in my throat and my eyes are swollen red and the next thing out of my mouth might be vomit or a broken sob. why do we see different things when we look at the sky? me: an unexplainable epiphany; you: the rest of your life. i ask your opinion when i already know what you'll say and what i've decided but i still need to know the answer because you'll always be on my side. how do i keep functioning under the weight of my consciousness? the continuous self-birth of life is exhausting, the monotony of waking up each morning. but maybe you'll help with that. do you sleep in the pitch dark, or do you like a few lights on? the blackness of a room at night reminds me of my depression. how do you know when you've lived a full life, and will i ever get to that point with you? maybe it would be best to stop before it ever has the chance of occurring, cull the disappointment of not living my life to the absolute fullest. but how could i ever leave you—beautiful, fantastic you. i can't wait to ask you to be mine, but i already know you are.

Nature's Resting Place

Reanna Bloomer

A canopy of branches
rest over my face
I pause to stop a moment
within this hallowed space.
A tapestry of red and gold
lay crushed beneath my shoe
As the greens of spring lay dormant
before they sprout anew

Breezes whisper stories
as they tangle in my hair
And a lonely mourning dove
calls crowing in despair
It's silent in this graveyard
Marred by winter's creeping chill
And in the vast expanse
a copse of trees lay still

A canopy of branches
hang like a funeral shroud
As over the dormant meadow
sorrow hovers like a cloud
The leaves have fallen downward
The brown bears gone to sleep
And all throughout nature's crypt
The ivy starts to creep

But death is not the end
Not in nature's realm
For warmer wind will blow
With springtime at its helm
Bright green grass will sprout
And dogwood flowers will bloom
For in this weary wood
The frost's but a temporary tomb

Not A Drill

Lara Boyle

I curl up in my shower behind the blue curtain. My skin is dry, my hands shake.
Footsteps tip-toe to safety, unlocked doors click shut with the turn of a key.
My grandfather hid like this for years. At any moment, death could ambush you.
The faster your heart beats, the slower time passes.

Footsteps tip-toe to safety, unlocked doors click shut with the turn of a key.
I wonder about my friends. One is hiding in a closet, another under a chair.
The faster your heart beats, the slower time passes.
I hide for one hour and thirty minutes after someone fires a bullet.

I wonder about my friends. One is hiding in a closet, another under a chair.
When I was little, I hated playing hide and go seek. But this isn't a game.
I hide for one hour and thirty minutes after someone fires a bullet.
My phone rings. A robotic voice says it is safe to resume normal operations.

I curl up in my shower behind the blue curtain. My skin is dry, my hands shake.
My grandfather hid like this for years. At any moment, death could ambush you.

Comer

Emiliano Briones

I don't want to see the stars.

They always come with
pinpricks of pain that are numb,

so numb,

I've grown to crave their buzz.

I fear them when they leave their perches from the sky,
invading my vision, making me dizzy with dread
that I've done it again.

And I sink as the stars move from
head to hands to
stomach
then the rest.

I do
this to
myself,
don't I?

It's hard to admit out loud.

But I've asked for help this time,
I'm beginning the process.

Recuerda mija:
"Si no sanas hoy sanaras mañana."

So I will take a bite of a sweet nectarine
and let water rush over my lips, putting

back the stars into their skybound spots where
they can no longer breach my brain.
Some small steps to giving
myself better care.

To eat is to nourish,
to nourish is to love,
and love is what
I deserve.

Cerulean Sweetheart

(After "The Wild Geese" by Wendell Berry)

Daquinua Craig

Sitting here on a Monday afternoon,
I taste the sweet
and tangy nostalgia
of summer's end. Longing for
more time with you, I call your name
in selfish hope that you might choose
to stay. You've opened
my heart and I've found the
thing that I've been missing
in you.
Clouds appear high over me, but
this will pass, and the sky
will always return to your favorite
shade of blue.
The clouds are here,
but I am patient.
My brilliant blue beloved,
until you return
I will wait for you here.

Honey Dearest

Daquinua Craig

Honey dearest,
How are you? I hope you've been well.
I have so much to tell you.

I've learned so much while you've been away…
About the world, about myself, but
honey, dearest,

I've mostly just missed you.
I must choose what to write carefully, but
I have so much. To tell you

that I miss you any less than the day you departed
and left me here alone would be a lie,
honey dearest,

But I don't blame you. It wasn't your fault.
I just wish that we'd had a little more time.
I have so much to tell you.

I can't wait 'til the day I can finally
join you, hold your sweet face again, and say
"honey dearest,
I have so much to tell you."

Borderline

Grace Forbes

I watch as the waning moon sinks below the hill
Living in fear that I've lost myself again
Another night turns to morning; I lay awake still

The voices are growing more and more shrill
"Don't get too close", I'm my only real friend;
I watch as the waning moon sinks below the hill

"They don't like you, they don't care, they never will"
Trapped in the echoing walls of my own head
Another night turns to morning; I lay awake still

I look in the mirror and start to feel ill
I've seen someone else since I was a kid
I watch as the waning moon sinks below the hill

Been searching for a purpose I can never fulfill
I'd sell my soul just to be normal instead
Another night turns to morning; I lay awake still

They tell me I'm fine, just take another pill
I watch as the waning moon sinks below the hill
Another night turns to morning; I lay awake still

Quiet

Grace Forbes

Blissfully unaware as the blended days go quiet
In an atrophied state, her throat and mind quiet

Two years of silent desperation left a mark on her presence;
Slashed by the dagger of a familiar soul who refused to stay quiet.

Eternally compensating for the shame of despair,
Her guilt salts her wounds, conditioned to loathe the deafening quiet.

A new era, new friends, a new chance to start again,
A new outlook on life: "I'll speak up this time;" lines blur between sadness and quiet.

Through twenty years of invisibility, she fantasized of translucency:
A vivid lucid dreamer, laughing at the opaque reflection that glares through the backing quiet.

Her thoughts, her feelings, her uncommon mind
Exposed, she finds herself in the light, finally, with traits unknown in the quiet.

Chronic loneliness swiftly turns to the fear thereof,
Suddenly her words are too much, drunk on heightened emotion, her sore throat craves quiet.

A decades-old cloak swept away, unknowingly revealing the naked truth of her being;
Its sharp edges drew blood, lovingly draining all that it grazed; no wonder they've gone quiet.

She wept tears of venom as her wounds spread unto those she used to know;
A scarring reminder of a self-fulfilling prophecy she was never able to quiet.

Lost in the navigation of a foreign experience, consumed by a fantastical reality;
Intrusively resuscitating her ghosts back to life as they haunt in intentional quiet.

She learns to live with scars now self-inflicted, the white noise fades to black
The echoing shame of tripping center-stage: You're too much, Grace, just shut up and be quiet.

Prom, 1978

Ellie Fritsch

A picture of innocence
tucked between
the folded pages of a yearbook
that you were never featured in.
A beautiful girl,
pink tulle and Chantilly lace—
a boy who loves her,
a sister who prematurely wore black.
I was dancing when you were dying
torn between the drink table and the dance floor
while you were
caught by the open flask and the car door.
First kisses, lights flash,
broken glass refracts, last breaths.
Why do we capture the edges of tragedy
on the foreground of innocent beauty?
We so easily forget
what we desperately cling to remember.
Only what we capture between frames
and carve out in ink
will endure.
*

We endure.
We carve out in ink and
capture moments between frames.
What we desperately cling to remember,
we so easily forget.
On the foreground of innocent beauty
we capture the edges of tragedy.
Broken glass refracts, last breaths,
first kisses, lights flash.
Caught by the open flask and the car door,
while I was
torn between the drink table and the dance floor.
I was dancing when you were dying,
the sister who prematurely wore black.
Gone is the boy who loved you.
Pink tulle and Chantilly lace—
Beautiful Girl,
you were never featured in
the folded pages of the year book,
tucked away
as a picture of innocence.

Beneath the Trees

Luke Haefner

What has more beauty than a blanket knit of grass;
Despite that I would be frozen in the chill,
I would doze there still amongst the wind-blown bed,
A loyal, blissed, yet ever-shivering mass.

I'd have that bed, too, and a roof of trees
To give me such a feel that I'm at home,
And I'd never need to roam, for there's my life,
A bed of grass, a roof, a calm yet cutting breeze.

As the meager shine looms from the East, I'd rise,
Use the blooming heavens to dry the dew,
Still shivering through and through, I'd face the day
With a frost-rimmed pair of eyes.

Then once I'd filled my human duties well,
I'd return to my blanket knit of grass
And another night would pass, and soon again I'd wake
Encrusted in that frozen, nightly shell.

Despite the wintry winds, the rain, the freeze—
What's a little cold, a little wet, a little ice?
To be that close to beauty would suffice,
To be that close to beauty—forget the ease,
You'll find me living somewhere deep beneath the trees.

Two Hares

Jaylen Jones

Our room dusted with memories and selves
I never want to return
to a homeless love.
Her face a muddled mirage.

I never want to return
for our ties are now separate.
Her face a muddled mirage.
Two flames choking each other into submission.

For our ties are now separate.
Rivers overflown with scandal.
Two flames choking each other into submission.
Hands skewed in one another's torso.

Rivers overflown with scandal.
We made out in quicksand.
Hands skewed in one another's torso.
Our lips recite "I promise" and "sorry."

We made out in quicksand.
A race between two hares.
Our lips recite "I promise" and "sorry."
When we kiss each other goodbye.

Where Does the Fog Go?

Connor Lindsay

I'm still searching for you, son
in the depths of the forest where you were lost
in a mist that covered the trees like
mud in still water,
blurring, hiding precious things in its murk.

I stare across the river at the idea of you:
a formless, voiceless figure in the haze
that might be a log or rock or deer,
but I must believe I'll see your face until
I cross and find that it is gone.

I hike through prickly grass,
wipe sweat from my scalp and itch my arms
as a cloud of gray mosquitoes jeers around my ears.
They know, in their incessant buzzing
that I will not find you, that the fog

keeping you from my arms
is my own creation. It flowed from my lungs,
coating every word I said and didn't say
before you drifted into the woods one morning,
losing your way in murky, heavy, nameless fear.

Where does fog go when it leaves our woods?
Do the sun beams cut and slash it to shreds in the air?
Does it float back up into the sky and rejoin the clouds?
Or is it eaten by the trees
as they breathe in and consume our troubles?

When the trees have finished their meal
and I stand in clear woods,
I know I still won't find you here.
The riverside will remain empty, without even familiar ghosts,
and I will join the fog as the trees obliviate.

Vivant (Alive)

Vic McKown

Evokes a blank.
Plunging into another world,
I live in memories where
decrepit cobbled streets flutter with people.

I breathe cigarette plumes,
dusty clouds.
Droplets pulsating against my face.

I drink scalding chocolate, milky swirls create
lines. Ink drenching pages
form unwritten rules.

Here mannequin statues ride
hollow trains
to clock towers rippling in an endless sky.

Trois
Deux
Un
I pause time.

I paused time.
One
Two
Three

Clock towers rippled.
In an endless sky
here, mannequin statues rode hollow train lines.
Ink-drenched pages.
Formed unwritten rules.

I drank scalding chocolate, milky swirls created
droplets pulsating against my face.

I breathed cigarette plumes.
Dusty clouds, decrepit.
Cobbled streets fluttered with people.

I lived in memories where
Plunging into another world
Evoked a blank.

The Harbinger

Allison Morton

Shall I float throughout mahogany stairs
Or sit in chairs of velvet with a tart
While waiting for laughter to be apart
Of sweet vanilla savor in your hair
Mingling with intense passion in stale air
Releasing the tension within my heart
Fire crackled and I saw you dressed in art!
I finally let a breath move from my lips–

I filled the halls with an ominous tune
hoping you'd hear my warning cry! Alone
I watched Death ride upon your heels. Strewn
about I wept when scythe cut skin and bone
laid out on a bed of flowers soon
to stay forever beneath dirt and stone.

Open House

Jenna Plaisted

I was there everyday after school,
riding in the red pickup or dropped off
by the yellow bus.
It's one story, half covered
by trees in the front yard. The brick
faded and the ivy overgrown.

The curling cast iron railing leads
to the cold door. I always
knocked, even when I didn't need to.
I baked in that kitchen and
read in that armchair. I took naps
on the pullout couch in that room.

Eventually, the tiles started peeling
around the oven. The armchair sagged
and the couch grew boney.
It became quieter with every visit.
The house dimming as its owners
did too. Unrelenting hushed voices.

I haven't seen the inside in years.
We don't have that house anymore,
or the red pickup. It's gone.
Gone, like the owners are.
Gone, like the memories I recognize.
Gone, like I wish they weren't.

They painted the house and put lights
in the windows. Along with a
For Sale sign in the yard.
Soon to be two owners separating
it from me. I don't know the inside
anymore. It's not for me.

"The Hesitant Fiancée"

(After Auguste Toulmouche)

Jenna Plaisted

She stares straight ahead, her eyes
scorching a hole into the tapestried walls.
The women that beck and call at her side
are singing their praises for her gown.
A young girl is modeling the crown,
wondering when it will be her turn.

You would gladly have taken my place.
Taken your position in the white chemise
and lace. The satin collar and the beaded
waist. But not before your time has come.
Please, wait. Enjoy your dress up and play
pretend, don't take this fool's errand.

There is an unfettered annoyance in her face.
A heaviness to the brow to match the
dead weight in her eyes, to combat
the lack of blush in her cheeks. Her hands
limp in the fingers that grasp them,
dreading the moment the gloves come on.

I have run out of time, but you have not.
You have not been matched, not been
sought. Your hand has not been taken,
it is still your own to carry and to hold.
Pick it up and go, but take the crown with you.
Run, my sweet girl, run.

My Name

Evely Reyes

My name is Evely Reyes
Growing up I wished I had a more common name like Ashley or Victoria
Honestly, any name that was easier pronounce would have made me content At school, getting called into the office on the intercom was always so embarrassing "Can Evilley Rice come to the front office her mother is here to pick her up early" All the kids would laugh
But my laugh would always have to be louder
I changed schools a lot in elementary school
Everytime I debated in my head
"Should I make myself a nickname or try to fake an accent so they don't think I'm Mexican?"
But I never did
"Eve" or "Evie" never sounded right to me
Those names disconnected me from the creativity and raíz of my parents
I love my name in Mexico
And I enjoy the pronunciation of my name in Spanish
It gives me warmth
Reminding me of my Abuelita Cuca waking me up para desayuno with the handmade tortillas from the horno she made every single morning at 6 am
Or my little cousins calling me trying to get my attention as I stare off into the mountainous landscape behind my abuelitos' house
My name also gives me a sense of validation to when I answer the typical question "No, where are you REALLY from?"
"Well, I was born and raised in Charlotte, North Carolina, but my family is from Mexico"
A sentence that's so ingrained in my head, my tone and pronunciation is always the same
But don't forget the follow up question
"Oh, so you're fluent in Spanish right?"

The question I always dread to answer
An answer that isn't ingrained because I always feel the need to over explain myself
"No, I'm not fluent"
A sentence always followed by judgment
People are quick to assume I'm a "no sabo" kid
Well truthfully, I used to say that as a kid
My madrina would ask me where something was and I would reply "no sabo" But at the same time my family had to teach me English instead of Spanish to "fit in" So, why bother correcting her if its a language she doesn't need, it won't matter I am conflicted by the Spanish language
I had to stop speaking the language to "fit in," just like my indigenous ancestors were forced to by the Spaniards
So, in reality, Latinos face hate crimes and discrimination in the U.S. for a wanting speak the language of a colonizer
Over 350 indigenous languages in Mexico were silenced
As a chicana,
It's comforting and discomforting that other chingonas have experienced a similar story. A story our younger siblings and cousins will have to face. Always having to explain and prove to others why you should be accepted in both roles. As if we cannot have multiple identities, as if the concept of intersectionality is non-existent.
Yo soy una chicana que no "sabe" cuando detenerse en contar su historia.

Walking on Whetted Eggshells

Sophia Russano

I've been walking on eggshells for too long –
The soles of my feet are red and my shoes are made of blood.
The possibility of living joy bled out of me,
leaving behind a deadly sadness.

The soles of my feet are red and my shoes are made of blood.
The bricks that promised to protect me were just blades reflecting the illusion of a shield,
leaving behind a deadly sadness.
Each shattered shard pierced every piece of me.

The bricks that promised to protect me were just blades reflecting the illusion of a shield.
In search of comfort, I reached out to hold them, but
Each shattered shard pierced every piece of me.
I realized that I was living in a house of knives.

In search of comfort, I reached out to hold them, but
all that came of it were shouts and crying, screams staining the floor.
I realized that I was living in a house of knives
and that people are mirrors, but sometimes, they are glass javelins.

All that came of it were shouts and crying, screams staining the floor.
I gave and I kept giving. I knew they'd never give back what they took
and that people are mirrors, but sometimes, they are glass javelins –
stopping at nothing until there is nothing left to take.

I gave and I kept giving. I knew they'd never give back what they took
but I kept treading that broken balance beam as they pulled me from all sides,
stopping at nothing until there was nothing left to take.
Eggshells as sharp as fangs litter the labyrinth I'm navigating.

I kept treading that broken balance beam as they pulled me from all sides.
After I crashed, I peeled the blood-soaked socks off my feet, replaced them with bandages.
Eggshells as sharp as fangs litter the labyrinth I'm navigating
and I think, "I can't be everything to everyone anymore."

After I crashed, I peeled the blood-soaked socks off my feet, replaced them with bandages.
The possibility of living joy will no longer bleed out of me.
"I can't be everything to everyone anymore."
I've been walking on eggshells for too long.

Cuca

Anna Julia Vissioli Rodrigues

I see Cuca amid flicking stars by my window's crack,
Alligator mulher, blonde haired engulfed in scales,
and a bag flung over her shoulder. I hear a blasting wail
from Gabriel's peeling blue house. Cuca whacks
him on the skull and crosses the street to hack
Márcia de Silvia into bits, the lone daughter of a sales-
man. She marches to the house with a split roof to avail
in nabbing naughty children past their bedtime. Jack's

house is next. No, no, no, not his house, but mine,
Minha casa amarela. Inside, knots and twists brawl
as I bury myself in rosy blankets but in my spine,
Her claws scrape along my flesh. A violent squall
from my window's crack, only feeling myself decline.
Cuca hauls our bodies out for more children's downfall.

The Girl with the Scar

Anna Julia Vissioli Rodrigues

On the cracked street, there lived a girl
with a grotesque scar that uttered regrets
of others. Not born with it, but gained by a stone
thrown by her cruel brothers with pimples and dirt
on their chins. She was never loved nor cared
for by anyone, even her parents. Until one day,

she decided to slither out of her window mid-day,
when they always banished her to the overly girly
bedroom of pink ballerinas. Her mother cared
for each brush stroke by hand, only started to regret
her existence when the scar confessed the dirty
secret of her oldest brother's father. Stoned-

faced and determined, the girl stepped on the gravestone
pre-dug for her. With a sign, she told herself, "Today,
starting today, I will seek true love, not dirty
by cruelty and lies. I deserve better, to be called atta-girl
instead of a mistake." The scar announced the regretful
faults of the girl in chant, but she persevered, past the s-care-

crow at the end of the street. With each step, a picare-
sque advantage awaited her, a light stroke on the fieldstones.
Her sole comfort came in the literature of unforgettable, regret-
filled scoundrel, no manners, yet prepared for doomsday.
They might be hated, but desperately needed. Unlike me, the girl
thought, when can I become more than my scar? More than the dirt

stuck to someone's shoe? She leaps over a dug dirt
hole, but a clawed hand emerges to caress
itself around her ankle. A raspy voice mumbles, "Girl,
why do you have the scar of truth?" A dry cough as stone-
flies encircled the terrified girl. She nearly bawls out may-day
then she noticed a goblin with an identical scar of regret

staring back at her. In shock, the scar mumbles, not an ugly regret,
but of heavenly fantasy of vast oceans and jumping whales with dirty
spots. "I understand the appeal of my scar, but all lies, a false day-
dream. Make certain that no one loves me, only my scar. All care-
givers cling tighter to the scar. Until one day, I ran away while stoned
off liquid and hid here. But now, all has changed because I found you,
Girl."

Daylight arrived earlier than expected, yet neither had any regret,
Girl or Goblin, who built a bright red cottage out of the dirt
carefully picked by the pair, who now spend their days painting stones.

FICTION

Nyctohylophobia

Emiliano Briones

Sleep never drifted toward him in darkness. The obscurities of nighttime and all their little noises kept him awake, accompanied by an electric kettle and endless cups of earl grey. Facing a window with the blinds drawn to keep his focus on his pages, Manuel pecked away at the electric typewriter his abuelo gave him, ancient from his elder's accounting days. It was a gift he received when he told the family his intention to become an author.

An unsettling assortment of trees and bushes was the open pane's view; thick and encompassing but not quite mazelike. His house had outdoor lights that provided the window with just enough illumination, and even if those went out light flooded in from the streetlamps. Even with the light, the scene looked like something out of an analog horror. Manuel had learned to fear that sight, and his aversion to what haunted him kept his concentration steady.

His cousin Alfonso usually slept in the room adjacent to his and often went exploring. He was eager to discover what was held in the twisted array of pine, ash, and cedar. With a field guide and a dented canteen from his stint in the army, some days Alfonso would be gone for hours or vanish for the night and be back in the morning. The first time he did that, Manuel went after him, so worried a horrible, conjured-up scenario had happened to him. The forest was a daunting place and the darkness of night had long settled in. He brought a dying flashlight and a steak knife on his witching-hour rescue attempt. But Manuel didn't study the forest with the same ferocity of his cousin, so predictably he ended up lost. Surrounded by snapping twigs and rustling leaves, moonlight dimly penetrating the treeline, the wind swayed the branches above and he swore to the gods he heard whispering. Suddenly the darkness was too dark, the noises were too many, and a pressure in his chest brought him to his knees. It felt like figures were leering behind every tree and rock his flashlight dimly attempted to illuminate. He hunkered down where he

was standing, eyes shut to keep the shadows out, and began begging for his cousin to find him. He wailed until his throat felt like he'd swallowed thorns and his breathing became burdensome. There was numbness, then the weight of shadows and finally: nothing.

Alfonso was the one who woke him up, perplexed by how his cousin ended up passed out at the edge of the woods. The highlights of dawn embraced Manuel's eyes, as did confusion at a delay. Last night he must have encountered a force. He took his movement from amidst the trees to their outskirts as a sign he wasn't welcome, yet something lingered in his mind. He was so sure his cousin heard him, heard something. Alfonso stared at him, a twinge of guilt beneath his eyelids. He gave no answer and kept on walking toward their home.

Manuel became enamored with the jolting, horrible feeling he got when the sun set. What was out there must come back for him, no? Abuelo would have believed him. As a child, he filled Manuel's mind with stories about the darkness and uncertainty of the woods. In a way, those warnings served as early inspiration for Manuel's literary passion. The forest made him. He was in debt to his abuelo and the forces found in nature. But Manuel was too scared to physically step back into the woods, so he opted to place himself in its view while he wrote, forming the habit of never sleeping until daybreak. He became almost nocturnal, churning out pages of the manuscript he'd been drowning in for years. His writing was improving, at least according to his editor. The fear was working. He needed that rush of eeriness and dread that came when he stared out the window for far too long. Preparing to break his gaze from his pages, he held his breath in anticipation. Perhaps today would be the day he'd been praying for. Perhaps today, something would be staring back.

The Silence Before the Storm

Brendan Burns

It was raining again. Normally, not something that Luash would notice. After all, it would rain every now and again, supplying his crops with the water they needed to grow.

But this wasn't normal.

Luash peered out the shuttered window of the tavern that he had sought refuge in when the rain began again. It was sprinkling then. Now it was a downpour. Luash returned to his thoughts as he pondered the reason behind this sudden onslaught of water. It had been raining on and off for almost 3 days now, in the middle of the dry season. Other villagers often chided him for reaping his crops early, saying that he could be wasting a portion of his yield by not letting it dry completely. Luash grinned.

We'll see who's wasting their yield now.

Luash returned his gaze to the near-empty tavern around him, populated by a few other villagers and some others, unrecognized by him. He didn't come into town often, preferring the company of his family back at the farm, only coming in to sell his crop and buy other supplies. So, seeing unfamiliar faces was a familiar feeling to him. The tavern was old, not quite decrepit, but definitely not in its prime. The walls drooped with age, leaning inwards as a grandfather would lean on his cane. The decorations had long lost their luster, existing with a sort of dull permanence that exudes from the very foundation of this building. It may be old, but it hasn't gone anywhere yet, so it sure won't go anywhere now. Luash had sat in this tavern many times, but today was different. It felt *odd*. It was oddly quiet, like the silence that followed lightning. You knew something was coming, but you didn't know when.

Luash took a swig of his mead, only to have movement out of the corner of his eye catch his attention. He blinked in surprise, as he saw the source of the motion. Someone he hadn't noticed earlier was sitting in the corner of the room, tucked away from the entrance. They were dressed in strange clothes, an unnatural mixture of leather and metal, each edge

and corner folding into itself, creating a carefully-crafted chestplate. The stranger's face was hidden behind a cloth hood that seemed to glow with an otherworldly blue aura. Luash averted his eyes, as the stranger suddenly seemed to jerk to attention, then shrugged it off and returned to his drink. Before Luash could return his inquisitive gaze to the figure, a barrage of thunder rolled across the sky, bringing Luash's attention back to his present predicament. He glanced back at the window, where the rain had appeared to get even worse, limiting his view of the road beyond. There was a flash of lightning, the sudden brightness causing Luash to blink.

Wha-

Luash searched the window frame, looking for something. Luash only saw a brief instant of light before blinking, but in that second, a silhouetted figure was burned into his retinas, its inverse outlining the inside of his eyelids as his eyes shut. He looked around the tavern, seeing if anyone else noticed, but no-one seemed to react. His heart, beating with adrenaline, began to slow, until a realization dawned.

The stranger was gone.

Silence allowed this realization to hold court, until the stale air of the Tavern rattled from thunder and the Earth seemed to awake from its slumber. In an instant, the walls and roof were torn off and its patrons thrown with the debris, like an unwelcome insect. Luash hit the building across the way, sliding down the wall to hit the ground. Grasping for any sort of explanation, he looked back at the corpse of the Tavern, his eyes being drawn up the street where multicolored light was shining. Reds, oranges, greens, and purples, but at the center, a vivid cerulean blue. The Stranger hovered slightly above the ground, propelled by some unnatural force. He was surrounded, other unfamiliar people, with hands aglow. They were yelling at him? Luash didn't understand. He coughed, blood splattering on the ground beneath him, only to be washed away by the deluge of water pouring from the heavens. He dragged himself to his feet, clutching the wall that caught him earlier. Luash didn't know what made him move forward, but he limped towards the group, trying to hear anything that might explain what's happening. They didn't acknowledge him as he grew closer and by some miracle of the winds, their shouts were carried to his ears.

"-by order of Highhearth, you are required to return with us for questioning and re-integration!"

That must have been one of the strangers surrounding the hovering figure.

"Do you really think you can just ask me to come back willingly? The entirety of your wardens couldn't keep me from leaving, if you planned to bring me in by force, you should have brought more than just five inquisitors!"

The voice had an otherworldly tonality to it, as if several people were speaking in unison, in a broken harmony. Luash saw the bottom of the hovering man's jaw moving, but maybe it was the wind, maybe it was the rain, it didn't match his words.

"If you do not comply, we have the authority to bring you back by any means necessary!" Another inquisitor, before being cut off by yet another voice. "Come on Evankhell, you are surrounded and we will not hesitate to use lethal force!"

The very air began to crackle, as the floating man, now identified as Evankhell, began to rise further into the storm, a discordant laughter cutting across the winds.

"You must really believe you have a chance. Unfortunately, I am not the one surrounded for the storm is my ally and answers to ME."

Evankhell began glowing even brighter as he finished and raised his hands to the gods. A single bolt of lightning raced from the clouds to him and the world exploded into blue light and unrestrained energy. And Luash knew no more.

Scission

Daquinua Craig

I get up from bed and make my way across the dimly lit room. I try to avoid its gaze as I head into the bathroom, but I walk backwards to keep it within my field of vision. I get inside and lock the door. Sit on the toilet. Try to ignore the scratching noises coming from outside as I empty my bladder. My eyes are barely open. I haven't slept in a few days, or maybe a week. I lost count. Haven't left the house. Just avoid eye contact with it while keeping it in view. If I don't look, it'll surely have me in seconds.

I flush the toilet and creep up to the bathroom door. I ignore the sink. No sense in wasting time washing my hands. I've never been in another room for longer than 3 minutes. At first, it gave me 40. Then 32, then 28, then 17, then 11, then 8, then 6, then 5. Now 3.

I don't ever have time to look in the mirror. I don't remember what I look like anymore.

I crack the door open to peek out and make sure it isn't lurking behind any corners. The lamp is off. Of course the lamp is off. Why wouldn't the lamp be off?

I exit the bathroom and shut the door behind me. I find it's made itself comfortable in the left corner of the room this time, opposite of the lamp. It's always trying to catch me off guard. I won't let it. Can't afford to.

It gurgles in an attempt to mimic a laugh. The noise sounds more like someone's stomach churning. I cringe as the vibrations chafe my ears.

"You can't keep playing this game forever," it murmurs.

I don't speak back. The last few times I addressed it, it grew. It's gone from the size of a small rat to a grown elephant.

I approach the lamp, still not turning my back to it. It gurgles again, louder this time. Thousands of bees swarm in my chest. They sting and ache, but I still maneuver my hand behind me and find the lamp switch. The light switches on. I still don't look directly at it, but I catch its outline from my peripheral. Jagged black lines like grotesque dandelions surround its core. Sharp as knives, wriggling like spider legs. They disgust me.

It gurgles again and I retch. Words spew from my mouth before I can even try to stop them. Frenzied, seething, raging words. I see red. I convulse and foam at the mouth.

A question emerges from the depths of my throat:

"Are you hungry?"

It growls at me, spikes launching from itself to tower over me like giant hands. But I am no longer afraid, so I persist:

"Starved for something?"

It roars this time, like an ocean made of glass. Thousands of tiny shards stab my eardrums. I feel the sides of my face become slick with blood, yet I push on:

"Why do you crave what you can't have?"

"You know nothing of what rightfully belongs to me," it yells, infuriated.

Something in me trembles:

"And you know nothing of self worth."

A sharp pain runs through my head. Overcome with weakness, I fall to the ground. As I collapse, my vision splits, and I see separately from both eyes.

With my left, I see its sharp silhouette. With my right, I see myself again for the first time. With rose-colored eyes, they grin at me, and I smile back.

Like Father, Like Daughter: A Flash Fiction

Emily DeAugustino

I lift my heavy skirts as I descend down the stone steps. The knight's armor clinks with each step as I follow closely behind, the only light coming from the torch in his hand. Even the sun, ever gracious with its rays, has abandoned us here. I shiver as we go deeper into the damp dungeons and a foul odor threatens my lunch. I press my lavender-scented handkerchief tight to my face to ward against the pervasive memories.

My father used to scare me with stories of monsters with razor-sharp teeth and talons. He'd always say that the monsters waited for pretty little girls of virgin blood and pure hearts to gobble up. He said they were grotesque, with skin hanging from their limbs and unhinged jaws. My mother would always scold him, telling him to stop filling my head with horrible images. He thought it was funny when I wet the bed from one of my nightmares. Just like when he thought it was funny to lock me down here, with nothing but the rotting corpse of some poor soul who dared to challenge the king's order of giving up a large portion of their crop. He thought it was hilarious when I screamed and cried and sobbed myself to sleep, all while the foul stench of rot made me sick to my core. I suppose it was my fault...my father ordered me to never go into the east wing after dark.

"This is what happens when someone disobeys the king!" he bellowed when he threw me into the dungeon.

"Your majesty, we're here," the knight said. Another guard that's next to the cell bows to me. The knight lights the torch next to the door of the cell, and an eerie light is cast into the room.

"W..who's there?" a weak cry echoes out.

"Oh dear...don't tell me you don't recognize me, father!" I say, the lavender cloth still pressed close to my face. I hear chains clank as the emaciated and dirty form of my father crawls towards me. I bend over to stare him in the face, gaunt and filthy.

"Edeline..." my father says, gripping the cell. "Edeline, please let me out of here! I beg of you!" His voice shakes, desperately reaching out.

"Funny, I seem to recall saying the exact same thing...right before you reminded me that monsters like to eat pretty little girls like me," I say, pulling the cloth away from my face. He stares at the scars that rake across my lips and down my chest.

"Tell me, father...Am I still the pretty little girl that monsters like you gobble up? Even all scarred and having tasted flesh?" I grin at the disgusted look on my father's face.

"What will you have us do your majesty?" the knight asks me. I stand, placing the lavender cloth to my face once again.

"I want his flesh to hang from his limbs, his jaw dislocated...sew nails to his fingertips, and then throw him into the square. Show people what a real monster looks like."

La Mujer que Llega a las Ocho

Briana Meyer

La mujer que está siempre sentada a las ocho en punto en la estación del autobús es de estatura baja, con piel de color chocolate, y pelo largo y negro puesto en una trenza hasta el medio de su espalda. Es muy silenciosa y reservada, y siempre lleva la misma bolsa grande de color marrón que parece a punto de desmoronarse. Cada día laboral aparece allí a la misma hora, sin importar el clima o la temporada. Tanto tiempo la he visto mantener esa rutina que me da consuelo verla llegar y saber el tiempo exacto sin mirar mi reloj.

Un día, cuando yo había llegado temprano a la estación, la observé pasar por la calle de un vecindario cercano, su pelo en trenza como siempre, y cargando su bolso al lado. Nuestros ojos se encontraron y las dos nos dimos una sonrisa de reconocimiento, pero no intercambiamos ninguna palabra a favor de sentarnos en un silencio cómodo. Para ser honesta, nunca la he escuchado decir ni una palabra en todo el tiempo que la he conocido, pero de todos modos, las ocho de la mañana no es momento para una conversación profunda entre desconocidos.

A medida que pasaban los minutos más y más gente llegó para esperar con nosotras. Un grupo de mujeres estaban de pie en un círculo hablando en inglés en voz alta. Ellas no tomaban el bus con mucha frecuencia, pero siempre que volvían eran las más ruidosas. Esa mañana una de ellas estaba de muy mal humor, y le estaba contando a sus amigas sobre su experiencia con unos extranjeros viviendo en su complejo de apartamentos. Decía que tenían demasiada gente viviendo en la misma casa, saliendo y entrando a todas horas del día como les daba el gusto. También añadió con disgusto que no debían cuidar a todos los perros y gatos callejeros que solían pedir comida por esas partes.

—Esos mexicanos deben quedarse en su país. No están bien educados y todo lo que saben hacer es trabajar en el campo.

Su comentario me sorprendió inmensamente, e instintivamente mis ojos fueron a mi compañera. Estuve segura de que ella podía oír todo

lo que decían, pero al ver que ni siquiera estaba mirando hacia arriba, empecé a dudar si ella podía entender inglés. Comprendí con pena que ni siquiera sabía una cosa sobre ella que no fuera su apariencia o puntualidad. Seguramente las mujeres en el círculo pensaron que no hablaba inglés, o no serían tan abiertas con sus palabras ofensivas. Al ver que ella no respondió a las palabras cortantes dudé en dar voz a mi propia incomodidad, y nadie más en la estación se involucró para enfrentarlas.

Pasaron un par de semanas en las cuales ese grupo de mujeres no regresaron a la estación, pero esa suerte se quebró en un lunes poco propicio. El piso estaba lleno de charcos de las últimas lluvias de días anteriores, pero eso no les detuvo de reunirse en un círculo y hablar como siempre. Cuando llegó por fin el autobús, ellas siguieron hablando mientras que se acercaron a la puerta. De repente, y con un gran grito, una de ellas se tropezó en el escalón y se cayó de espaldas. Me parece que se había distraído y su pie se resbaló por el agua. Se quedó mirando al cielo sin moverse, y nos dimos cuenta de que se había lastimado.

Sus amigas estaban congeladas de sorpresa, pero en un instante, mi compañera silenciosa apareció arrodillada a su lado con su bolsa marrón. En respuesta a eso las otras mujeres le trataron de explicar que se alejara, pero sin dar un momento de pausa, ella les respondió en inglés perfecto:

—Yo soy la doctora principal y dueña de una práctica privada en medio de la ciudad, la cual yo fundé. Déjame hacer mi trabajo.

Evaluó a la mujer tal como estaba en el piso de la estación, abrió su bolsa para sacar tijeras y gasa, y empezó a envolver la cabeza en donde se había pegado. Al terminar su trabajo, ordenó que la moviesen por los brazos a un banco para estar más cómoda, y les recomendó llevarla a un hospital. Las mujeres siguieron sus órdenes en un estado de vergüenza, y abrieron sus bocas para darle gracias o a lo mejor disculparse por su comportamiento anterior, pero no les dio ni una oportunidad de sacar una palabra. Con un último consejo de tener cuidado de una concusión, cerró su bolsa y se subió al autobús en frente de todos nosotros observando la interacción en la estación, y no miró atrás ni una vez.

NON FICTION

Methods of Escapism

Megan Biesecker

Home

"Maybe, with good luck, we'll find what eluded us in the places we once called home." Roebuck Wright, The French Dispatch

Home is a mirage, an exquisite vision of a fantasy I may never grasp. Home is what you make of it, they say. But how can you make something when you have no instructions, no previous experience, no guide or map or trail to follow? When generational trauma has wrapped its claws around your neck and forced you to keep breathing through the pain, through the tears, through the endless conversations and therapy sessions, and please, why won't you just acknowledge that you hurt me?

Home is realizing that you may never have a home. How could you if you push everyone away, you don't let them get close, you don't tell them that you truly believe you won't ever deserve a home? So how could I get to that place where I am comfortable enough and confident enough and close enough to someone that will give me the home I fantasize about? I can't make something from nothing.

Home

"A poem is a gesture toward home." Jericho Brown, "Duplex"

A monster,

~~disguised as my mother,~~

rears Her head at me

through the phone,

our lives connected over

hundreds of miles.

She—with Her age and

history and wisdom—

telling me I should call more often.

But She should know,

should understand, should hear

why I don't call or talk or text

about what's going on?

What's happening with you?

Oh, me? Plenty to do here

without you, without me,

without regard

for what She's done.

She

is no longer home,

but I wish,

I desire,

I beg

to be enough for her.

Home

n. one's place of residence

Home is not home. Home is where I stay on holidays and breaks and over the summer, but it is not home. I am a visitor in my own house, in my own room—the sheets of my bed are unfamiliar. I fear when I have to go back there, to that place filled with darkened memories shoved into the back of my half-empty closet. I hide myself, sheltering in my own mind because I can't be myself—it's too risky—so I accept the names they say and the pronouns they use and the daughter they want me to be, because I have no other choice. How does one backtrack to a place when they weren't themself? I am a mystery at home.

Home used to be loneliness and tired and heaving their expectations over my head. It was isolation and depression and nothing of comfort. It was four teal walls and a mess of broken hearts. I never understood why people got homesick—I loved being away from my home and the people in it. But now, home is going to therapy and coming out to my sister and talking about all the things I was too scared to mention as a child. Home is discovering new things about myself and the people and places around me and finding out that maybe I'm not who I thought I was and never will be again, and that's so perfectly okay. Perhaps one day, home will be with a person, in a place we have made our own, full of books and laughter and love. Or perhaps I'll make a home all by myself.

Home

n. any place of refuge

Home is reading, in my bed and on the floor and outside with the trees and while I walk to class, out loud to a friend or from my phone or quietly in the library, at the airport and on the bus and in the back of the car and everywhere and anywhere I can get a few more words in, just until the end of the next chapter—I swear I'll look up then, I'll pay attention then, I'll listen to you then, just give me a few more minutes, please.

Home is in the car, driving alone with the windows down and the heat on and the music turned up as loud as it can go. It is the freedom in the movement beneath me, of the wind in my hair and the music in my ears and tears streaming down my face because I always cry when I'm alive. It is the flight I take in my mind when I close my eyes and there's nothing beneath me because I am air and wind and life. And when I was overwhelmed or reeling after a fight or had discovered a new song that I just had to hear, the bass-boosted JBL speakers of my ratty and shaking 2004 red Jeep Grand Cherokee was home.

Home is the familiar flick of the lighter. Two stoners, sitting on a back staircase, getting high almost every night because it is the best and most expensive coping mechanism out there. What else can we do as broke college kids with high expectations and a low capacity for trauma, burnt out and brainwashed, exhausted to the core for putting up and holding up everyone else's weight and lies and pride, and what the fuck else are we supposed to do when we're saddled with the world?

Home has become a specific dorm room I now call my own. Home is the pride flags on the wall and obscure movie posters and feeling safer than I ever thought I could be. The home I never expected—present and accepting and freely-giving of the love I always craved—but still a home tainted by everything that came before it.

Home for me has always been an escape. I am not at home here or there or anywhere, so I find home in books and movies and people and drugs and everything that will take my mind off the fact that I can't get comfortable

no matter where I am. So, I escape. Escape to new worlds and new highs and with new people. And maybe in those other places, I'll one day discover home.

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Ode to Monkey Joe's

Daquinua Craig

On the outside, it's just an ordinary beige building. Nothing eye-catching. If it weren't for the big sign plastered on the wall labeling it as "Monkey Joe's," you'd probably continue your drive down Pineville Road without giving it a second glance. Even then, the slightly faded red and green letters wouldn't really tell you what's beyond those plain double doors. The only way you'd know is if you went inside yourself (Or if you looked it up on the internet, but where's the fun in that?).

On the inside, a lively palace of inflatable slides and bounce houses, all following the same color scheme of the sign on the outside—most had red and green stripes with a touch of yellow here and there. Walls were adorned with balloon and confetti patterns. Children ran around freely, supervised by employees. Their laughter and playful screams could be heard from everywhere. Parents also observed from afar, sat on benches and couches placed throughout the building. I would frequently attend with my younger siblings and cousins and walking inside was always exhilarating. We just couldn't wait to start having fun.

On the left side of the building was the front counter, restrooms, and the rooms for birthday parties. The rest of the building was home to several inflatable attractions. The one closest to the entrance was specifically for younger kids, with various colors—purple, green, red, yellow, and blue—shorter slides to go down and smaller holes to squeeze through. Across from it was a basic inflatable slide, colored green and half as tall as the building itself. It was simple enough for all ages to enjoy and tall enough to still get a thrill from sliding down. Behind the slide was an obstacle course for older kids, which I enjoyed racing my cousins through to see who could complete it the fastest. Further back and closest to the party rooms was the purple bouncy castle, which I loved to jump around in. My favorite was the giant red slide all the way in the back, placed in the center. It was always the first thing I saw when entering the building. Its height reached all the way to the ceiling. Climbing up to the top was like trying to climb a mountain and going down

was like a roller coaster. Sliding down was just one big red blur. It was one of the few things I could always enjoy, even as I got older and became too big to maneuver through the other courses.

Monkey Joe's was a place where I attended many birthday parties, but never my own. I ate countless cakes decorated with the names of my cousins and sang them "Happy Birthday" many times from across the table, but never once was the child in front of the cake. It makes me wonder why I feel so connected to a place that I never celebrated my own day of birth in. I suppose, in a way, it reminds me of the childhood I missed out on. The childlike atmosphere and the purity of the environment. Every now and then, there might have been a crying kid who bumped their head on the slide or one who didn't want to go home just yet. Other than that, the energy was always playful, and it was always strong.

I miss Monkey Joe's. It was one of the few places that I could use to escape the issues at home. I remember the crushing anxiety I would feel when the adults would tell us that it was time to leave. I remember wishing that the Monkey Joe's would stay open forever. I realize now that it was never about wanting to stop the fun I was having. It was always about dreading going home. Because at Monkey s Joe's, there was never any fighting. The only things thrown were balloons around the party room, the screaming came from children having fun, and my heart raced because of excitement rather than fear. As I got older, Monkey Joe's became more of a place I could use as a distraction and less of a place I could just have fun in.

On my last ever visit to Monkey Joe's, I didn't participate in any of the activities. I felt too old to climb around in obstacle courses and jump around in bounce houses. Instead, I was tasked to keep an eye out for my younger siblings and cousins. I watched from afar as the other adults did, wishing that I was younger and more free. I was only about 12 or 13, though. I was still a kid, but the years of trauma made me feel far older than I actually was. A small part of me envied the freedom of my younger family members and their ability to be unbothered by the problems of the adult world. I observed from a distance, time after time, as they slid down my favorite slide. I wished so badly to take off my shoes to run out and join them, but I felt that I had to be far more mature than other kids my age and being more mature meant I

couldn't play around at Monkey Joe's.

I wish I had, though. I wish I had enjoyed my last time in Monkey Joe's to the fullest. All Monkey Joe's locations closed in 2020 due to the pandemic, and the company decided to close them permanently. I think that being able to revisit Monkey Joe's would fix something in me. It would help soothe my inner child, the one whose childhood got cut short by the crushing reality of life. Unfortunately, I will never get to walk through those plain double doors again. Maybe someday, sitting outside of the building and reminiscing will be enough.

The Vast View

Valentina Gil Girón

A window is not a personal object, it's not something I can pick up and carry around everywhere I go. A window is something many people have in their homes, and not just one. You might walk past it every day and not think twice about it. You might be driving past luxurious houses and see the floor to ceiling windows that decorate the house, or the haphazardly-placed windows that make you question whether an architect was involved in the process. As I'm writing this, I'm sitting on my bed at my grandparent's place and the single window located diagonally from where I am is shining light into the room, the white blinds making the light cast a pattern on the blue dresser that sits next to it.

A window is not special at first glance. Most probably know that glass is made from heating raw materials like sand at scorching temperatures, then poured into molds or even manually molded with tools. There's a whole industry dedicated to the art of making glass, but that takes us away from the subject at mind. There are so many different types of windows. Just think about it; from the huge plain ones used in conservatories, to the typical suburban house ones, to even the colorful ones that decorate the inside of religious sites. Some windows have divisions that run parallel or perpendicular, some open by sliding them upwards, others by pushing them outwards, and some don't even open at all. Windows can be round, in the shape of a half moon, square, triangular or even rectangular. They can measure a few inches or a few feet, they can even be bulletproof. Here's an interesting fact: back in my home country, because of the constant tremors or earthquakes, windows are designed to break into big pieces, rather than shattering into a million tiny ones.

I had never given much thought to the importance of windows until I moved away to college. I currently live in the Albright dorm, and share my room with one other person. When you're picking a room in a college dorm, you weigh other factors above little ones such as the position or size of a window. At the time it seems irrelevant. But I noticed it a few days after

I settled in. I remember rearranging my room so that my desk would be against the wall and be next to the small window. As an artist, light is very important to me. If the light is yellow, it can distort the way colors look, the same goes for certain white lights. This is why they sell certain light bulbs that don't do that; however, the best alternative is using the natural light that comes through a window.

I remember it being the second to last day of orientation week for international students, we had just come back from touring uptown and so I went back into my room to rest for a bit. My roommate was arriving the following day, so I was enjoying the last few moments of alone time. I took out my sketchbook and pencils and placed them on my desk. As soon as I sat down, I noticed something was off: there was very little light coming in, even though I had the blinds open. I shrugged and opened them further, but nothing changed. I turned on the big light and my lamp, and it still looked like it was dawn, yet we were still in summer, and the sun wouldn't go down for a couple of hours. It was then that I realized that I had taken my window back home for granted.

My room back home isn't huge like some rooms are here, but it isn't small either. I've managed to fit a queen-sized bed, a dresser and two desks in there, so it is quite spacey. My favorite part though is my window, which spans almost from one side of the wall to the other, leaving about two feet on either side. Said window is divided into two; the side that can be opened and the one that can't. The side that opens is lined up with my white desk—this is where I would spend most of my time painting, drawing and doing school work— and the one that doesn't lines up with my black desk—where I work on bigger projects, since it's a desk designed for painting. Every morning, before I left for school, I would open my curtains and push up the heavy window, allowing the crisp morning air to come in. In the afternoon, when I came back, the sun would be perfectly overcast, giving me the best light to create art or study. Since the window is huge, it allows a lot of light in, which is why I rarely use the ceiling light in my room, and instead opt for using those, and once it starts getting dark, I resort to one of the three lamps I have scattered around my room.

It seems like these two windows are the complete antithesis of

each other. One takes up the majority of the wall space in the room, while the other one seems like it's tucked away in a corner. The one in Albright has white borders and white blinds, while the one back home is adorned with a dark brown/almost black trim and paired with light brown curtains. They both open up by pushing the bottom piece up. However, the one back home has a latch that has to be unlocked and weighs a ton, while the one here just has some "levers" you have to press and then it can easily be opened.

I've never thought about windows this much, and I feel a little weird writing so passionately about it. But by doing so, I've discovered something that apparently is very important to me.

The Search for Identity Through a School Lunch

Jessica Ramirez

Standing in the lunch line carrying my black lunch tray and going through the depressing line of choosing the same foods over and over. Today we had a sloppy joe, sweet potato fries, grape juice, milk, and an apple that was turning brown from the outside. Punching in my lunch number and having to walk across the lunchroom to sit beside my American friends. The long gray tables with circle chairs were fun to spin around with. Public school lunches are one of the most depressing things a six-year-old can eat. It's either the same food every day, with no variety, or it's cold hard pizza. We also drink milk with our gross lunch. Most American foods are high-fat, unhealthy, and lack nutritional value. This is why the kids that came from white families had their lunch packed every day. Lucky for them, they never had to suffer by eating cafeteria food.

My American friends all brought lunch except for me. My friends would bring Lunchables, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and turkey and cheese sandwiches. Their snacks were Cosmic Brownies, Gushers, cheese string, crackers, or two Oreos. Of course, a classic drink would either be apple juice or Capri Sun. Their lunch always looked so good. The only time school lunch was always good was on Friday. On Fridays, we would have two pale white cheese sticks served with marinara sauce. Other options were four chicken nuggets that were soggy and served with either ketchup or barbecue sauce. The last option was a quesadilla that contained pizza sauce, mozzarella, and cheddar cheese. It had burnt bobbles on the top of it. It was served with salsa and sour cream on the side. I did not know what a true authentic quesadilla was supposed to taste like until I moved to Mexico.

At the age of six years old, I moved to Mexico. Not because of the bad cafeteria food, but because of other issues. I remember the long road trip on our way there. I had never been to Mexico or met my family. I didn't know how to speak the language, let alone know anything about our culture, traditions, and food. I remember the big welcoming hug my family gave us when we arrived and the welcome dinner that followed. There was a long

walnut wood table filled with many dishes. From appetizers, main entrees, and desserts. Surrounding this room, there were glass china cabinets. They contained all of my grandmother's fine china plates and china glasses. I remember my father sitting on one end of the table and my grandfather sitting at the opposite end facing my father. I remember everyone's seating chart.

We started with an appetizer of homemade corn chips with chorizo queso dip. The chips were crunchy, with a perfect amount of salt, and light. The chorizo queso dip was warm, gooey, and salty, and you could taste all the seasoning incorporated in it. The main course options were mole with red rice and homemade corn tortillas. There was also chicharron con chile, gorditas de picadillo, tinga, enchiladas rojas, and chiles rellenos. The dessert options were pastel de tres leches cake, flan, and churros. The candy that my grandma gave me was a sugar skull. I was flabbergasted by this candy, I had never seen anything like this in the U.S., it looked un-edible. My plate consisted of enchiladas rojas, a tostada de tinga, and some red rice. The enchiladas were soft, cheesy, and melted in your mouth when you took a bite. The tostada was crunchy and crispy. You could taste the delicious corn it was made out of. The tinga was very flavorful, the chicken was perfectly cooked, and I could taste the chipotle peppers with onion, and a little hint of tomato. As well as the spices within it. The rice was soft, warm, and tasted amazing. For dessert, I had tres leches cake, which was moist, soft, sweet, and contained small pieces of peach inside it. I had never felt like this towards American food. I was no longer eating bland and soggy foods.

Walking in the kitchen, coughing my lungs out due to the smell of chili peppers being roasted, and the strong aroma of garlic, onion, and cumin filled the kitchen. My grandmother was making one of my favorite dishes. It was Gorditas de queso. They were extra-thick tortillas with a cheese filling. You would serve it with salsa on the side. I never added salsa on the side because my grandmother made the salsa way too spicy for my liking. So spicy my eyes would be tearing up. I was never good with spicy food as a kid, and even now, as an adult, I can't handle it. I remember being in my parents store and a young child came with his mother. He was eating a jalapeño pepper like it was candy. No expression, no crying, just calm. I felt like a loser because I was older than him, and I knew if I had bitten into a

jalapeño, I would be crying like a baby and jumping around like a maniac.

Everything was different in Mexico, from education to food to people in general. There was no school lunch provided in the schools, which meant you either had to pack your lunch or bring money to buy from the local stands outside our school. My grandma would pack me lunch most days, but when she didn't, my dad would give me 20 pesos. The stand outside the school had mostly snacks like lagrimitas preparadas or chicharrón preparado. It is made with the large rectangular fried chicharrón de harina, which is then topped with chopped cabbage, diced tomatoes, sour cream, cotija cheese, sliced avocados, cueritos, and hot sauce. You can add these same toppings to lagrimitas or honestly any sort of chips like takis. One of my favorite lunches was Bolillo con salsa San Luis. Yes, it's just a short baguette with hot sauce on it. As a drink, I would have an agua fresca: lime flavor. I got introduced to lime a few days after my arrival. It was cut in half and had salt on it. I took a taste and it was one of my favorite things ever. I was obsessed with it from the moment it came into contact with my mouth. I wanted everything lime flavored and even would eat them as snacks. My parents had to ban them from our house because I would eat so many of them.

At the age of eight years old, I returned to the United States. I stopped eating school lunch and instead would take my lunch. I would take my food from back home. Opening my Dora lunch box and taking out containers that had Disney princesses on the lids. One of them was filled with rice and chicken with green salsa. A corn tortilla wrapped around the foil and another container that contained fruit with tajin. My American friends would make fun of the food I had, they said it looked gross. "Why is the rice orange? Did you dye it?" I lost a lot of friends just because my food was different. I felt like an outsider in my own country. I felt like I had lost my whole American identity just by embracing my Hispanic culture. The only way for me not to forget about my culture was to stick with my food. It made me feel like I was closer to my family even when we were 1,629 kilometers away from each other.

Now, at the age of 19, I have learned how to not only speak Spanish, but how to cook my traditional family dishes and how to embrace my culture. I have not seen my family since I was eight years old. Therefore, still having

Mexican food and cooking it while celebrating our traditions is still important to me. My grandmother has sent me recipes that I have used to cook food to feel closer to her. We celebrated some Hispanic holidays together over FaceTime. Recently, we celebrated Dia De Los Muertos. She showed me her altar and the food they celebrated with.

While I am happy to be embracing my Hispanic culture, I feel like I lost my American identity. I celebrate more Hispanic holidays and do more traditions than I do with my American identity. My parents are not American therefore, it's hard for me to balance two different cultures as well as embrace both of them. While my life back home is now much more wrapped around my Hispanic identity, my life in college has pushed me back further into my American identity. Now that I am in college, all I eat is American food and speak English with everyone. We celebrate a lot of American holidays in college, but we also celebrate Hispanic holidays, which is great. If it was not for some of the clubs on campus, such as LASO, that embrace Hispanic identities that keep me connected to my culture, I would feel lost. Before coming to college, I heard that college is supposed to help you figure out who you are. However, I'm afraid I am going to slowly start losing my Hispanic identity all over again. Because I am now having to figure out this new balance between my American and Hispanic identity, I have realized that I will always be somewhere in the middle. I will never be 100% of both.

Toothbrush

Anna Julia Vissioli Rodrigues

The professora, with a golden band on her left hand, clapped her hands loudly, pulling you away from the last piece of your sandwich. The white bread had its crusts cut off entirely. Otherwise, you would have rather starved, refusing to eat it with all the might of an eight-year-old.

"Time to brush your teeth, crianças! Come on now!" She announced with one more loud clap before you and all your colegas de classe scattered outside into the bathroom.

There, you found them with travel toothbrushes painted like the rainbow; vermelhos, amarelos, azuis, and everything other color. Yours was a royal purple, and you scrubbed the taste of mint from the front of your teeth to the back.

That was back in Brazil.

In the United States, you struggled to stuff down the cafeteria pizza that tasted more like cardboard than tomates frescos e queijo. Then you found yourself waiting, waiting, and waiting as the girls who encircled around you like vultures kept speaking inscrutable words in ingles.

You finally asked after nearly twenty minutes, "Wh…. where is the banheiro? The…. the bathroom??"

They took you. One girl stood on each side, your left and right, with their hands wrapped around your arm tightly out of fear or, truly, out of obligation to not let you get lost in the mountains, the seas of hallways and closed wooden doors. You pulled out your lucky purple toothbrush and began to brush, tasting the familiar taste of mint.

They looked at you in disgust, in pure confusion. Strangers from the sink stopped to gawp, eyeballs nearly rolling out of their sockets as the water just flowed down their paused hands. A cruel "gross" echoed through that bathroom when you spat out a white and bubbly residual of your toothpaste. That "gross" comment bounced off their opened mouths into your stomach, where it was twisting and turning as you tried to hide your burning cheeks inside your red hoodies.

You learned that Americanos don't brush their teeth at school; for its unhygienic, plain old yucky for them. We just don't do that in the US, they told you, you shouldn't do that anymore.

Your mother later informed you that they were the ones who were sujos. To walk around all day with pieces of pão, maçãs, and God knows what struck to their teeth. Learning with a filthy mouth of dentes amarillos and the breath that could knock down a jaguar. What is wrong with Americanos, she asked, what is so wrong with brushing your teeth? Everyone does it back in Brazil.

She made you promise that you would brush your teeth at school. Even though you nodded your head that day making your curls bounce, you returned home afterward with a backpack full of assignments, notebooks, and textbooks yet not as full as your heart. Your mother with a plate of arroz e feijão fresco welcomed back as you gave her a smile, one that was yellowing a bit more each day.

CRITICAL WRITING

Writing for the White Gaze

Daquinua Craig

For generations, black authors have struggled with the obligation to appeal to white readers. This "white gaze" and the phenomena of black authors' unspoken duty to make white readers comfortable has no doubt affected their confidence, the messages that they convey in their writing, and the quality of their work as a whole. Two authors who seem to have been affected by the white gaze are Olaudah Equiano and Harriet Jacobs—early contemporary black authors that have written about their respective experiences being slaves. Both Equiano and Jacobs write to appeal to emotion, seeking compassion from their white readers, but they go about doing so in different ways. While Equiano writes about how appreciative he is for being brought from his homeland and "transformed" by his "saviors" into a nice Christian man, Jacobs writes more about the suffering of slavery and her resentment towards slave owners.

Olaudah Equiano was a black writer, famously known for his autobiographical work The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavas Vassa, the African, Written by Himself. The narrative details his life before and during slavery. Throughout the narrative, Equiano clearly uses specific language to cater to the feelings of his white readers. Equiano was no doubt pressured to appease his white readers. He wanted to be viewed as a saved and humbled man to be more accepted by them. Several times throughout his narrative, he addresses the reader in apologetic ways. In the opening chapter, he makes it known that he does not expect "literary reputation" or "praise" (Equiano, 733; vol. A) after publishing his narrative. In the next chapter, he writes that he hopes not to offend the reader or "[trespass] on his patience" by writing about his country of origin and the memories he recalls from before he was taken away. In chapter 6, after recounting moments of despair, "oppression, extortion, and cruelty," that he witnessed after being kidnapped, he assures the reader that for the rest of the narrative, he will "only mention such [events] as incidentally befel [himself] in the course of [his] adventures" (755; vol. A).

Virtually, he chooses to spare the readers of the unpleasant side of slavery to make them feel more comfortable and appeal to their tastes:

> "He taught me to shave and dress hair a little, and also to read in the Bible, explaining many passages to me, which I did not comprehend. I was wonderfully surprised to see the laws and rules of my country written almost exactly here; a circumstance which I believe tended to impress our manners and customs more deeply on my memory. I used to tell him of this resemblance; and many a time we have sat up the whole night together at this employment. In short, he was like a father to me; and some even used to call me after his name; they also styled me the black Christian" (749; vol. A).

Despite being devastated about being kidnapped from his homeland and being driven to depression and thoughts of suicide from the anguish of being separated from his sister, he still writes about how he changes his mind and ends up being grateful that he was taken away and "transformed" into a good Christian man. In his time with Captain Daniel Queen, he attempts to compare passages from the bible to the customs of his own country. He is "styled" as "the black christian" because he is able to make these connections. His captors see him as more civilized this way. Perhaps this praise is what led him to write this narrative in the way he did.

According to the editors of The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Harriet Jacobs was "the first African American woman known to have authored a slave narrative in the United States" (909; vol. B). Jacobs wrote her narrative under the pseudonym Linda Brent, presumably to protect her identity. The narrative details Jacobs' life as an enslaved woman, the abuse that she suffered, and her longing to be free.

Like Equiano, Jacobs writes about being disheartened by her role in society. Although Jacobs still writes in an attempt to gain sympathy from her white readers, she does not shy away from the fact that she was treated horribly. She does not hide the anger that she feels towards her own white captors, Dr. Flint and his wife. She does not hesitate to delve into her suffering, to detail how she was mistreated, or to state that she "would gladly forget" this painful "period in [her] unhappy life…if [she] could" (Jacobs, 918; vol. B):

> "But, O, ye happy women, whose purity has been sheltered from childhood, who have been free to choose the objects of your affection, whose homes are protected by law, do not judge the poor desolate slave girl too severely! If slavery had been abolished, I, also, could have married the man of my choice; I could have a home shielded by the laws' and I should have been spared the painful task of confession what I am not about to relate; but all my prospects had been blighted by slavery....I felt as if I was forsaken by God and man; as if all my efforts must be frustrated; and I became reckless in my despair" (918; vol. B).

Jacobs often addresses her white readers directly throughout the story—her female readers in particular—requesting them to read her story without judgment, but she does not apologize for the events that she recounts. She asserts that her position in society was chosen for her, and that she could not help but make the choices that she did—nor could she help what was done to her. She also uses much stronger language in comparison to Equiano. Instead of being proud of having discovered religion, she writes that God had doomed her. It is interesting that she still published this, even with the risk of offending some of her readers.

Both writers, during these periods of hardship in their lives, used writing as a tool to share their stories. One could argue that Equiano took this as an opportunity to celebrate the positive aspects of his situation instead of dwelling on the negative ones. Perhaps this is why the tone of Equiano's narrative is the way it is—it is possible that he did not intend for his words to come across as an attempt to flatter his white readers. Simultaneously, one could argue that Jacobs wrote her narrative in an overly pessimistic, melodramatic way as an attempt to obtain the most possible pity from her white readers. Perhaps she wanted to be viewed as helpless and immensely unfortunate.

Although these methods are considerable, it is more likely that the two narratives are different because of the time periods they were written in. Jacobs' narrative being written nearly 100 years later than Equiano's provided more freedom regarding writing about slavery. In Jacobs' time, abolition was more popular, and it was less likely for her readers to be offended by her

experience. In contrast, Equiano is a lot more apologetic in his depiction of the horrors of slavery because his white readers were a lot less sympathetic towards the suffering of black individuals.

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Cut the cake: A Glimpse into the Multi-layered World of Marriage Law

Emily DeAugustino

The cultural and legal institution of marriage is an iconic milestone in western society. Many people dream of the idyllic day that they can walk down the aisle to the one that they love, however, it wasn't that fair in the past that the idea of marrying for love was unheard of. The conception, evolution, and utilization of marriage in western society, specifically under the legal understanding of common law, is well-tracked through multiple articles. Marriage was used not only as a means of securing an inheritance and legal personhood for women but was also used as a means of control via colonization and the patriarchy. Paradoxically, while women can say yes or no to marriage, the institution of marriage operates in a way to also take away the rights and autonomy of the woman.

Teresa Michals examines this in her essay on William Blackstone's writing. Looking at Blackstone's writings, although he uses property as a marker for citizenship in the understanding of slavery, the culmination of this essay concerns the part that marriage and women play in how property is used as a foundation for legal personhood. Within Blackstone's common law, property is the key to legal personhood."[He] defines liberty itself primarily as a right to the undisturbed possession of the property" (Michals 196). Moreover, Michals mentions that Blackstone states, "Blackstone, the very different abilities, rights, and duties of persons stem primarily from their different relations to real property… It is axiomatic for Blackstone that power cannot be maintained without property… more specifically, a stable social order, one built on the stable identities of generations of landowning gentlemen, cannot be maintained without real property" (Michals 199). Michals goes on to quote from Blackstone that "propertyless" members of the "masters" household are under the "immediate domain" of said master of the house. The property of that master, or property in general, is not seen as a marketplace commodity. Rather property is the legal foundation of families and is to move through lines of inheritance.

It is important to ascertain an understanding of how the property

operates in terms of Blackstone's common law to understand how marriage and women fit into it. According to Michals, "under the common law, at marriage a woman not only loses her property, which passes into her husband's possession; more fundamentally, she also loses her very ability to own property, becoming instead the property of her husband" (202). This consolidation of property, specifically this loss of property is tied directly to the loss of legal personhood that women have under common law. However, it should be noted that women of a higher social class were protected separately under a different system. "Wealthy women often came under the protection of the rival system of equity through marriage settlements that granted the wife certain rights to separate property, rights that were administered by the Court of Chancer" (Michals 203). Within common law, there is a complicated and nuanced application of the law depending on the social class of the individual. This adds another complex layer to the metaphorical tier cake of marriage under the common law.

A great way to visualize and understand how common law interacted with marriage in women's lives during the 18th and 19th centuries is through the novels, Evelina and Jane Eyre. Evelina by Frances Burney is an 18th-century novel that tells the story of Evelina, a young woman whose inheritance, and legal personhood, hinge on her finding a suitable match to marry. Her only way to contest her inheritance is through that of her husband. The novel also brings into question how marriage is used as an economic institution while also being used as a vehicle for protecting the ethics and "love" of a young woman. This idea of protecting the "ethics" of a young woman seems to work parallel with marriage operating as a gateway to legal personhood. There is precedent in this occupation that marriage has in the realm of societal norms and expectations, "...the institution of marriage, and the legislation that surrounds it, especially the laws surrounding the right to divorce, functions primarily to protect the rights of ethics" (Miller & Guyer 10).

Another example of literature being used as a historical witness to the marital institution would be that of Jane Eyre. At the center of the story, it is another young woman who doesn't need marriage for the sake of her inheritance, but rather she exercises the right to marry a man she wants. She

can choose her personhood, while also securing and protecting ethics. This right to choose who to marry is a focal point of not just Jane's story, but also that of Miller's article. "He [Warner] enters into the debate about the right to marriage to uphold the rights of the unmarried and, more specifically, to affirm the nuanced ethics of nonmarital social bonds (sexual or otherwise). If marriage becomes a truly universal choice, it must become the occasion to think about what it means ethically to live an unmarried life" (Miller & Guyer 4). The debate on the rights of the unmarried, and the right to choose are central to Jane's story. Jane can acquire property and even then can circumvent the law and keep her property while becoming one with Mr.Rochester. She lives an ethically unmarried life, fulfilled with the legal opportunity to be a person by use of her property. This is a stark contrast to Evelina's story and is in accordance with Michals article citing Blackstone in how women either had to give up their property to become a legal entity, however in Jane's case, she is able to radically challenge this idea and is a testimony to the evolving attitudes of marriage.

The use of marriage in the west under socio-legal parameters of common law is a stark contrast to the use of marriage in different cultures. In indigenous Hawaiian culture, marriage was a much more egalitarian proposition. Unlike in western society, "..an unhappy marriage could be easily broken by going elsewhere or by refusing to live together, and both partners would in time find other husbands and wives, although Handy and Pukui say that marriages were generally permanent and husbands and wives were very affectionate to each other" (Merry 232). Both partners, including women, had control over who they could marry. They had the legal and social right to choose. Hawaiian society, while also having its share of constraints on sexuality, was far more liberal in how they expressed marriage and sexuality. This came into direct conflict with the New England missionaries that came to Hawaii. For the missionaries, "[e]stablishing a new order of sexual conduct was a fundamental part of the mission project: missionaries sought to constrain desire and to cabin sexuality within marriage" (Merry 205). Marriage was not being used as an economic tool for inheritance, or even to attain personhood, but rather marriage was a tool for confining and colonizing the indigenous population into the western world.

However, an important aspect to understand is how common law marriage would operate once colonization had successfully redefined marriage. "The interior space is defined as a space of liberty outside the law but the exterior is regulated by laws about marriage, divorce, property rights, and inheritance (Fitzpatrick 1992: 180; W. Brown 1995). Internal governance is vested in the husband over the wife and in the father over the children. The state constitutes this private space but cedes its authority inside the space to the father/husband" (Merry 230). This moved marriage from being influenced by family and giving power to women to being influenced by the state and giving the power to the man or husband. Marriage was reformed to be an economic institution in line with Blackstone's common law. Stripping away the autonomy of women and placing more significance on inheritance, property, and control.

Another interesting aspect of marriage comes from the essay "Kant and Hegel: The sexual contract" which is mentioned in the article "Literature and the Right to Marriage" by Miller and Guyer. Much of the argument that is presented in this paper is in tandem with what Michals mentions in her analysis of Blackstone in "That Sole Dominion: Slaves, Wives, and Game in Blackstone commentaries on common law treatise." Kant and Hegel are taking on the economic and legal role of a contract:

> "Why must this sublation transpire between a man and a woman... the specificity of the marital relationship has to do with the political status of women in Hegel's time. Since women could not legally own property, the woman's interest in the marital bond necessarily goes beyond the exchange of goods. The function of the marital contract, or what Pateman calls the 'sexual contract,' is not to transfer property from one owner to another, but to inscribe women into the field of contractual relations for the first time-albeit by identifying her political destiny with her husband's future-and thus to make the contract into the universal form of social relations..." (Miller and Guyer 14).

Marriage is occupying a multi-dimensional space in the economic and political lives of women. It is acting as a legal contract that binds the woman's legal identity and autonomy to that of her husband. Referring to Jane Eyre,

this is why that piece of literature was so revolutionary: because a woman owning property and not interacting with the "sexual contract" of marriage, instead having the right to choose, circumvents the precedent placed upon marriage by Blackstone and later, Kant and Hegel.

Even with the argument that "the sexual contract" is not necessarily moving property, Miller and Guyer's analysis sheds a slightly contradicting light. Their argument implies that "...marriage 'confirms patriarchal right' because it grants women this status only to the extent that it legally formalizes their natural subjection to a man (father or husband). Pateman's analysis allows us to see how the specifically heterosexual nature of the marital bond makes it an exception among contracts, but she does not take Hegel's claim that marriage entails the sublation of contract. From the standpoint of the philosophy of right that opens with this sublation, the heterosexual contract (between a property owner and a 'woman') is important..."(Miller & Guyer 14). Under this argument there is a property transfer, which is more aligned with Blackstone than the "sexual contract" argument. Either way, the result is the same: marriage as an institution acts as both a legal foundation for personhood as well as a way of dehumanizing women into property.

There is also another layer of paradox that arises from marriage. Miller also argues that women do have a right to say yes or no to marriage, but can't refuse the institution of marriage. "[A]s soon as one has the right to marry, one has no choice but to choose whether to marry or not to marry... the fact that the political scales are weighed in favor of one choice over the other cannot be avoided, either. Although the right to marry would present the choice as a choice, there is in reality only one right choice" (Miller and Guyer 1). Even when there is a choice, a right to marry, there is a paradox happening. In connection with this are the strings of the legal and social framework surrounding legal personhood, inheritance, and livelihood.

Marriage occupies a multi-dimensional place in the legal, social and economic framework of western common law. The paradox of marriage, in which it acts as both a legal foundation for women but also a place of confinement is amplified by its occupation as a contract for inheritance and property exchange. As marriage evolves with society, and as society comes to terms with marriage's place in colonization and power, it is important to

understand the prominence and historical precedent that comes with this cultural milestone.

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Intersecting Queerness in Doom Patrol

Connor Lindsay

Even in a world oversaturated with superhero satire and edgy antiheroes, Doom Patrol stands out as one of the strangest and most genuine subversions of the genre. Its character goes past odd into the full-on surreal, wielding philosophical concepts against villains that defy our definitions of reality. Ever since the first comics about the superhero group came out in the 1960s, they've been seen as representations of heroes with physical and mental disabilities, queering them in a way that surpassed other figures like Mr. Fantastic; along with Marvel's X-Men, they created the idea that "a consistently portrayed disability did not automatically consign a character to the ranks of villains" (Smith 9). And with Grant Morrison's 1989 take on the characters, they gained another level of societal queerness in the form of their gender identities. Almost none of these characters, from the genderfluid and androgynous Crazy Jane to the hypermasculine yet impotent Robotman, fit with traditional definitions of gender or sex. They operate in an "othered" space outside the social norms, fighting villains that also exist outside those norms. These characters, whose goal it is to defend the world as it is, are constantly nonconforming in very similar ways to their villains. But what's most fascinating about this take on the story is how "Doom Patrol presents its characters as resolutely intersectional, their bodily/cognitive differences inextricable from their race, gender, class formations, and physical/cognitive differences" (Smith 13-14). Grant Morrison's Doom Patrol act as agents of nonconformity, operating at the intersection of physical, mental, and gender queerness. They fight against other agents of nonconformity; however, rather than maintaining the status quo, they often use the powers that arise from their queer identities to change the world in their own ways, subverting typical comic book portrayals of queer heroes.

When it comes to mental disability intersecting with gender queerness, the best example is Kay Challis, or Crazy Jane. A woman with sixty-four different personalities in her head, she is struggling with dissociative identity disorder, or DID. This had the potential to be tremendously distasteful,

especially with the sci-fi twist on the disorder, giving each personality their own distinct power. But Morrison actually did a good job with the handling of this character. They based her off of a real woman with DID, Truddi Chase, who published a memoir detailing her experience living with it. Another character, Will Magnus, describes Kay's disorder in the opening parts of the run:

> "She was abused by her father when she was a child... very badly abused. Her experiences resulted in what psychiatrists call dissociation. Basically, that means she developed multiple personalities to cope with the trauma. Her therapist tells me that so far they've identified sixty four separate personalities, each with its own name and function." (Morrison 30).

As unrealistic as having sixty-four different personalities is, the history of abuse and use of alternate selves as coping mechanisms match up well with real-world DID. Not only that, but Morrison avoids a common pitfall associated with DID: to make the character with the disorder into a serial killer, or otherwise someone psychotic. This trope appears in films like Split and Psycho, and the impact of this has made general audiences fear people with the disorder. In reality, and in this comic, people with the disorder often create alters as a way of protecting and comforting themselves, not to hurt others; in addition, Crazy Jane is shown to be empathetic and kind, caring about those around her, very unlike her counterparts as represented in pop culture. When it comes to Jane's gender identity, it is treated much like her personality: in constant flux. Some of her personalities are feminine, some are more masculine, but she nearly always has an air of androgyny about her when physically depicted in the panels. This is handled well in this conversation between her and Robotman, as he asks "'Merry Andrew? So, how many of your personalities have male characteristics, Jane?' 'A few. Sun Daddy is another. Driller Bill'" (Morrison 204). She explains her gender fluidity casually and without stigma, in stark contrast to public opinion at the time. In pop culture, people with DID are occasionally depicted as men who "cross dress," often played for laughs or to make them seem ridiculous and loony. Jane's personalities are more often treated with respect and as actual characters. She is given development and depth, extending beyond a one-

dimensional villain or a punchline. And her character arc doesn't have her "fix" this part of herself; rather, she learns to live with and accept it, realizing that "her problem didn't come from her multiple personalities, but from her own internalized ableism" (Briones). This not only corrects some of the popular stigma around DID, but also around those who are genderfluid or androgynous. Jane's portrayal as a member of the Doom Patrol does a lot of heavy lifting in providing accurate representation of individuals in not one but multiple othered groups, something she accomplishes due to the intersectionality of her character.

A more controversial character is this run's version of Negative Man: Rebis. Rebis is intersex, possessing both male and female genitalia and a sexually ambiguous body. Intersex people are of course real and deserve representation, and Rebis does a good job of acting as a powerful and empathetic character to identify with. They don't fall into the stereotypes the media often puts intersex people in, being promiscuous or deceptive; in fact, Rebis is incredibly straightforward and, if anything, avoids sexualizing themselves. They also deal with real world issues that genderqueer people face, like being dead named by Robotman in this interaction: "'I told you. Don't call me Larry.' 'Part of you is still Larry, so I'll call you want I want'" (Morrison 96). But beyond that, Rebis can be vague and obscure. That's where some of the issues in representation lie. Rebis wears full body bandages to keep the radiation from their body from killing those around them, but this also fully obscures their intersex body. Given that these bandages are meant to add to the monstrousness of Rebis, it could also be taken as covering up this body that society deems monstrous. That contentious choice is only further complicated when one considers how Rebis came to be. Rather than being born intersex, Rebis is the combination of two living people: Larry Trainor and Eleanor Poole, as well as the Negative Spirit that gives them their power. They were melded into one form against their will, and both Rebis and the other characters spend parts of the run figuring out how to adapt to this new body. This depiction of intersexuality fictionalized it in some ways, as this method of a person "becoming intersex" is so far moved from reality, one could argue that Rebis isn't really a representative of this group. And the general mystery around Rebis's interiority also makes it more difficult to fully know what

they are going through and what kind of inner challenges they are facing. But while "we don't know exactly what's going on inside their head... the fact that they're intersexual in a world that's obsessed with binaries is already challenging enough" (Briones). Rebis manages to be a likable character that breaks the gender binary and is still seen as a heroic figure. What Rebis lacks in quality of origin, they make up for in characterization, and Rebis is certainly one of the more interesting and likable characters in this collection.

Both of these characters contrast harshly with another member of the team: Cliff Steele, or Robotman. Cliff refers to himself as "a total amputee... haunted by the ghost of [his] entire body" (Morrison 24). Which is indeed the case: his whole body was destroyed in an accident, leaving only his brain, which is now inside a clunky robot body. He can't feel, smell, or taste, and his lack of body and senses make him feel removed from humanity. While Cliff does struggle with PTSD in several of the issues, he lacks the gender queerness that his counterparts play into. Or so it seems, at first. While Rebis and Crazy Jane play into this aspect of their personality as a strength, since it figures into their powers, Robotman's form actually detracts from any kind of gender or sexual identity. He leans hard in the hypermasculine persona of other edgy heroes, but as is revealed in Issue #30, he no longer sees himself as a man. While Cliff puts on the persona of someone with a hypermasculine gender identity, in reality he sees himself more as devoid of any gender at all due to the physical trauma he went through. But unlike the others, he does not play into this; rather, he is ashamed of it, and hides it. Robotman represents the facet of queered groups that fight the battles of the conforming, "normal" segment of the population. In fact, many heroes could be said to represent this: The Thing, the X-Men, the Umbrella Academy, all people struggling to "defend humanity against all threats while inspiring it to become more tolerant of people with physical differences" (Alaniz 118).

But the Doom Patrol are different in one important way: they pretty consistently change the status quo in the act of saving it. The villains they face are often more conceptual in nature, and you can't defeat a concept by beating it up with superpowers. Instead, they use their own knowledge of queered spaces to find solutions to these surreal problems. They create paradoxes, trap folks inside paintings, and slow down the death of the universe without

stopping it. As Niles Caulder, their leader, says "There are areas in which only we are qualified to operate. When the rational world breaks down, we can cope… because we've been there, in ourselves" (Morrison 108). It is rare that after a plot arc is finished, everything is back to "the world as it is." Things are permanently altered, often made more surreal, more queer, including the Doom Patrol themselves. Because the arcs of these characters don't have them conform to societal norms; instead, "during the course of the run, all of them overcome their personality issues, and rather than find a way to fix them, they learn how to live with themselves without changing to fit into an arbitrary set of values. They embrace the strangeness instead of fighting it" (Briones). The Doom Patrol isn't trying to assimilate or even be accepted by the people they are protecting. They use their otherness to save lives, even if it leaves them stranger than when they started.

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Past, Present, and Future: A Modern Alternative to Leopold's Land Ethic

Lindsey Bernier

Aldo Leopold, when outlining his idea of the land ethic that should shape individual and societal action towards the environment, formed his philosophy upon the idea that "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." His consideration of the biotic world as a complex, interdependent community in which humans play a part is a significant change from the preceding anthropocentric philosophy of the early 20th century that viewed nature and humanity as two separate entities in conflict with each other. In an ideal world, this ethical system-- one that takes the health of the biosphere as a whole into account-- would guide our actions and shape our priorities. Leopold acknowledges that the current state of the world makes this difficult, as "economic feasibility limits the tether of what can and cannot be done for land." What he does not acknowledge is the fact that modern society is structured in a way that makes it next to impossible for the average citizen to behave in accordance with his philosophy without failure. Systems of infrastructure and zoning make it unthinkable for the average American, living in an unwalkable city, to cut cars and fossil fuels out of their life. Globalized production of goods and food means that the majority of the population cannot meet their needs without purchasing unethically obtained or manufactured items or paying money for crops grown in monocultures. The continuously growing population demands the destruction of wild spaces for the sake of creating homes and extracting resources to accommodate for more members of the human race. Under the current societal structure, it is impossible for the average citizen to adhere to Leopold's ethic unfailingly. Simply existing as a human being in the modern world means doing harm, intentionally or otherwise, to the biotic community. For this reason, I intend to propose an alternative land ethic-- not to replace Leopold's, but to serve as a midway point between past anthropocentrism and the hopeful ecocentrism of the future, to act as a bridge between the cur

rent reality and a world in which Leopold's ethic may be followed more closely. This bridging ethic would be composed of three tenets: the aim to remediate for past failures to steward the environment to whatever extent possible, the intent to meet the needs of humans and what exists of the natural world in the present, and the objective to remain constantly aware of the impact of actions and decisions on the future (namely, to strive for a future where Leopold's ethic is more applicable).

Remediation of past failures may contribute to the restructuring of the systems that make it difficult to practice Leopold's land ethic in the first place. This will mean a push for governments, corporations, and other significant societal entities to revise and amend policies regarding sustainability that have guided their actions in the past. This may involve urban re-planning: making cities more easy to traverse on foot and focusing on re-developing already built upon areas that have become neglected as an alternative to expanding further outwards. Land restoration through reforesting and rewilding methods may also take increased priority. In lands that have been subject to colonization, the involvement of historically silenced indigenous voices in government and land management is critical as both a cultural and environmental reparation. On a societal level, we must examine the corner we have backed ourselves into, how we got here, and why-- understanding of past failure is critical to future success.

In the present, we must continue to try to meet the needs of humanity. Unfortunately, the way in which those needs are met in the current world is destructive by nature, and an adjustment of methods is in order. Avenues must be provided for food and goods to be produced domestically and as locally as possible to reduce the pollutant outputs of international transportation. The pandemic and war in Ukraine have shown the fragility of the current system of global trade. Likewise, the destruction of the Amazon for agricultural purposes proves that, by compelling each country to produce for itself as well as others, we are condemning them to shooting themselves in the foot through the destruction of their lands and depletion of their resources. This is not to say that global trade will be wholly eliminated-- this would be nearly impossible given the global

needs of electronics production and the needs of developing nations-- Just as Leopold commented on, the prioritization of economics is killing our planet and the people who live on it. The present is the time in which we must create an alternative primary social priority: the health of the Earth and the people on it. The death of American hyperconsumerism would be a significant step; socially discouraging fast fashion, encouraging the use of smaller cars, and supporting local businesses and artisans rather than mass producers would be possible steps forward. As usual, economic drivers are the most obvious obstacles in the way. If we ever hope to achieve a world where Leopold's ethic may hold true, we will need to kill the businesses that meet consumerist wants rather than needs and redirect labor towards the production of goods domestically rather than outsourcing abroad, building sustainable infrastructure, elder care as birth rates fall, and insulating society against the future impacts of climate change (perhaps via a program akin to a second Civilian Conservation Corps).

Lastly, it is imperative that we redirect the focus of governmental and business decisions away from short-term outcomes, such as finance, towards the long-term outcomes on the health of the biosphere. Stronger legislation to protect endangered animals and their habitats, reduce CO2 outputs, and regulate pollutant outputs and disposal must be created. When questions of the economy versus the survival of the planet are raised, we cannot afford to pretend that there is a legitimate reason to prioritize the former. On an individual level, we may leverage our purchasing power to the best of our ability to support companies and causes that are environmentally cautious and withdraw support from those that are not, when able. Individuals may also consider limiting how many children they have if they plan to start a family-- increasing education opportunities for women and access to birth control will also be beneficial on this front. A collective effort must be made to move towards a society where it is not ecologically harmful to simply exist as a human.

Up until this point, the driving force motivating modern society has been an economic one. Even though the majority of the population has no hope of joining the ranks of the ultra-wealthy (those who own the companies that are draining the planet's resources and destroying its oc

cupants), we allow them to continue to steer the trajectory of the human race, moving it towards destruction. This must change. Leopold writes that, to dethrone the monetary idol in the popular consciousness and redirect our attention towards caring for the land, we must hold "love, respect, and admiration for land, and a high regard for its value." His proposed method to instill this in the populace is education on ecology and related concepts, which is undoubtedly significant in creating a people who know how to care for the environment, but has proven to be inadequate in the decades since Leopold's time. Scientific understanding and popular awareness of nature has grown, but the wellbeing of the planet remains ranked below economic concerns in most people's minds. My suggestion is that we not only cultivate knowledge of the land, but love of it. People must be given access to nature. They cannot love what they do not know. I have met people who have never hiked, wince at the idea of touching an insect or small crawling thing, and fear to walk on any plant surface that isn't a monoculture grass lawn-- because, from a young age, they have been kept separate from all of it. The public must have access to parks, green spaces, and forests. Historically, these places have been made inaccessible to people of color and people who could not afford to travel to see them, and cities have not included green spaces in their development planning. By protecting what nature exists, even in pockets surrounded by developed areas, we can provide opportunities for people to meet nature. Educational programs to introduce schoolchildren to the natural world via field trips and lessons could also be beneficial in cultivating environmental awareness from a young age. If enough people are aware of the goodness of this planet we live on, shown the threats posed to it, and provided with a better alternative, it is my hope that they will take it. This, of course, depends on the governmental reins being passed from corporate powers to the people, so politicians can create environmental legislation without living in fear of funding cuts. Until that transfer has occurred, it is up to the public to pressure lawmakers to act in spite of their fear. The most ethical thing we can do, currently, is to protest, raise awareness, vote where our values lay, and support one another as we try to move against a current that is flowing against us.

Trying to choose an ethical course of action will not be easy. Not on an individual level, and not on a societal one. But the facts show it plain and simple: if we continue to exist as we have in the past several decades, we will destroy the world in which we live. To adhere to the status quo is to condemn millions of species to death, perhaps ourselves included. If we hope to change the path we are set on, we must learn from the past, do what we can to defang harmful societal systems in the present, and make decisions for a better future, guided by a true love for the land and the creatures on it. If we fail to do this, we will be committing environmental matricide against our planet.

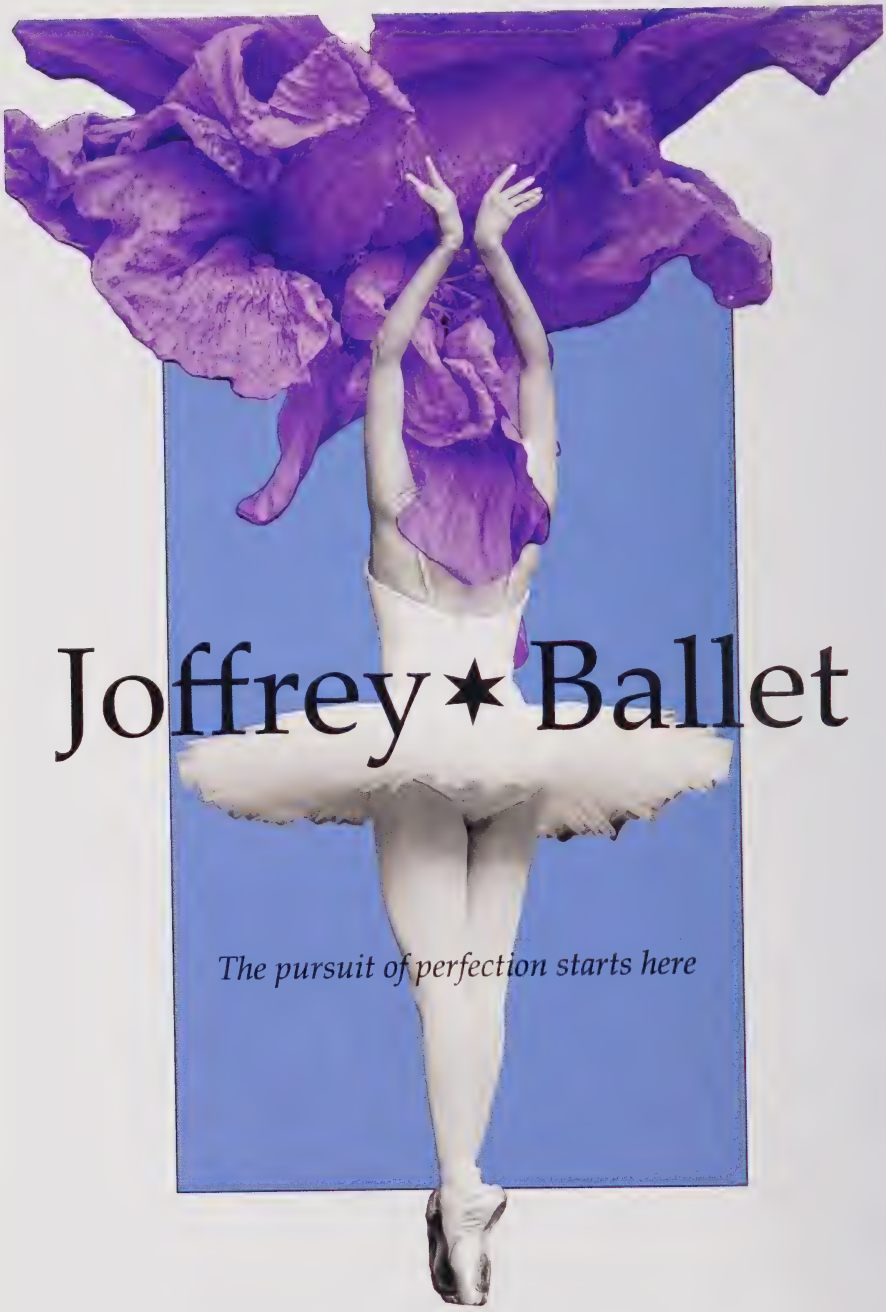
ART & DESIGN

Woodcut Self Portrait

Madison Webster
Woodcut Print

A Boy and His Crow

Kennedy Riddick
Digital Illustration



Joffrey Ballet

Allison Morton
Digital Art

Man of Many Sorrows

Izzy Jones
Digital Art

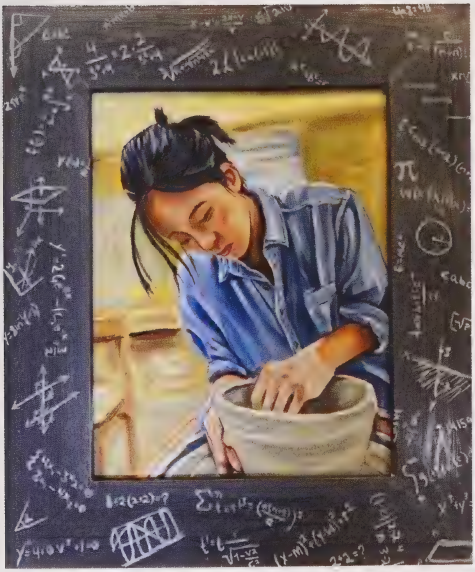
Watchful Eye

Emily Walter
Digital Art

Julie

Madison Webster
Oil Painting

Reign *Madison Webster*
Oil Painting



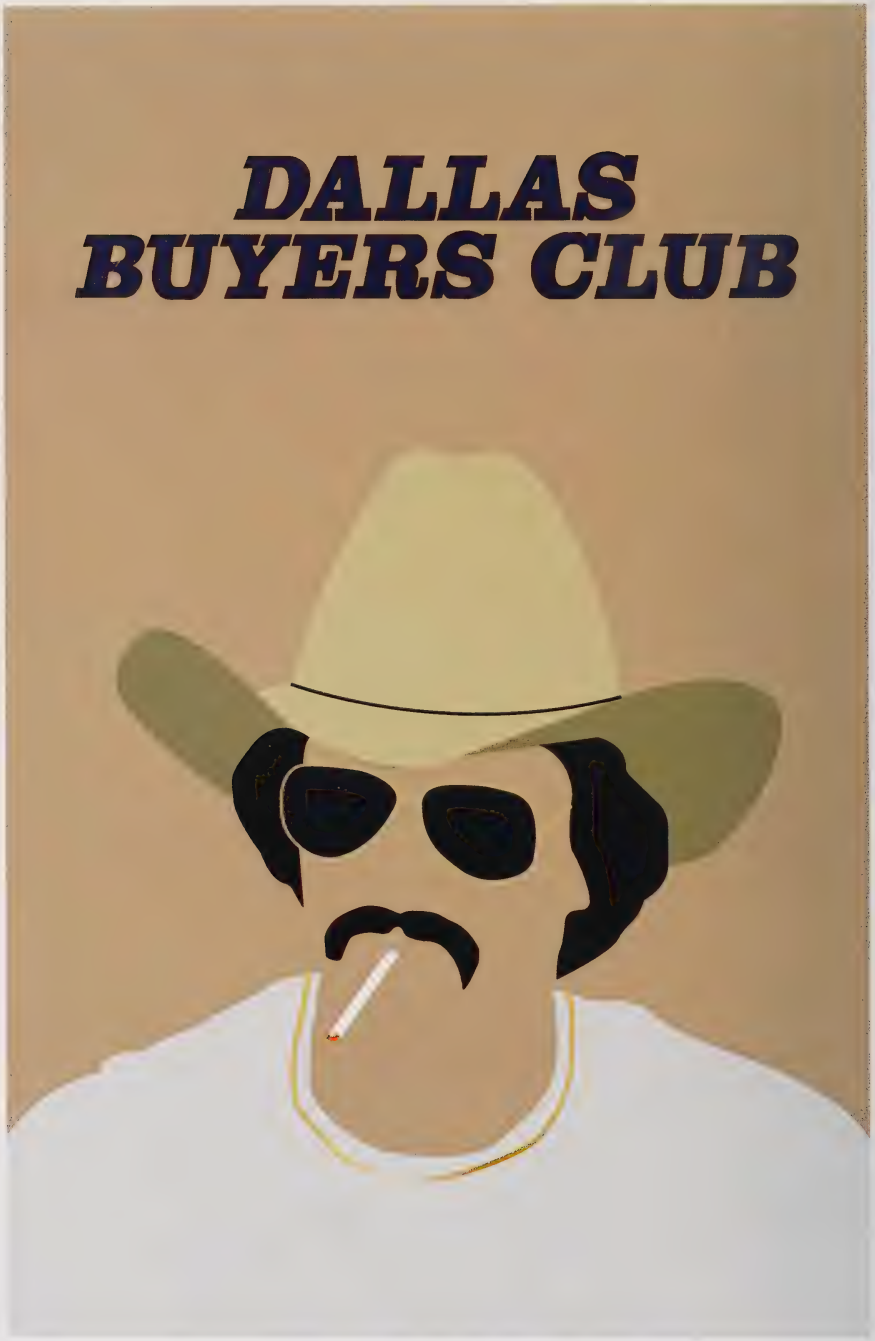
Reese *Madison Webster*
Oil Painting

Cherry Blossom Vase

Amadeus Waluga
Wood Fired Stoneware

Stacked Shino Jars

Kathleen Echevarria
Soda Fired Stoneware

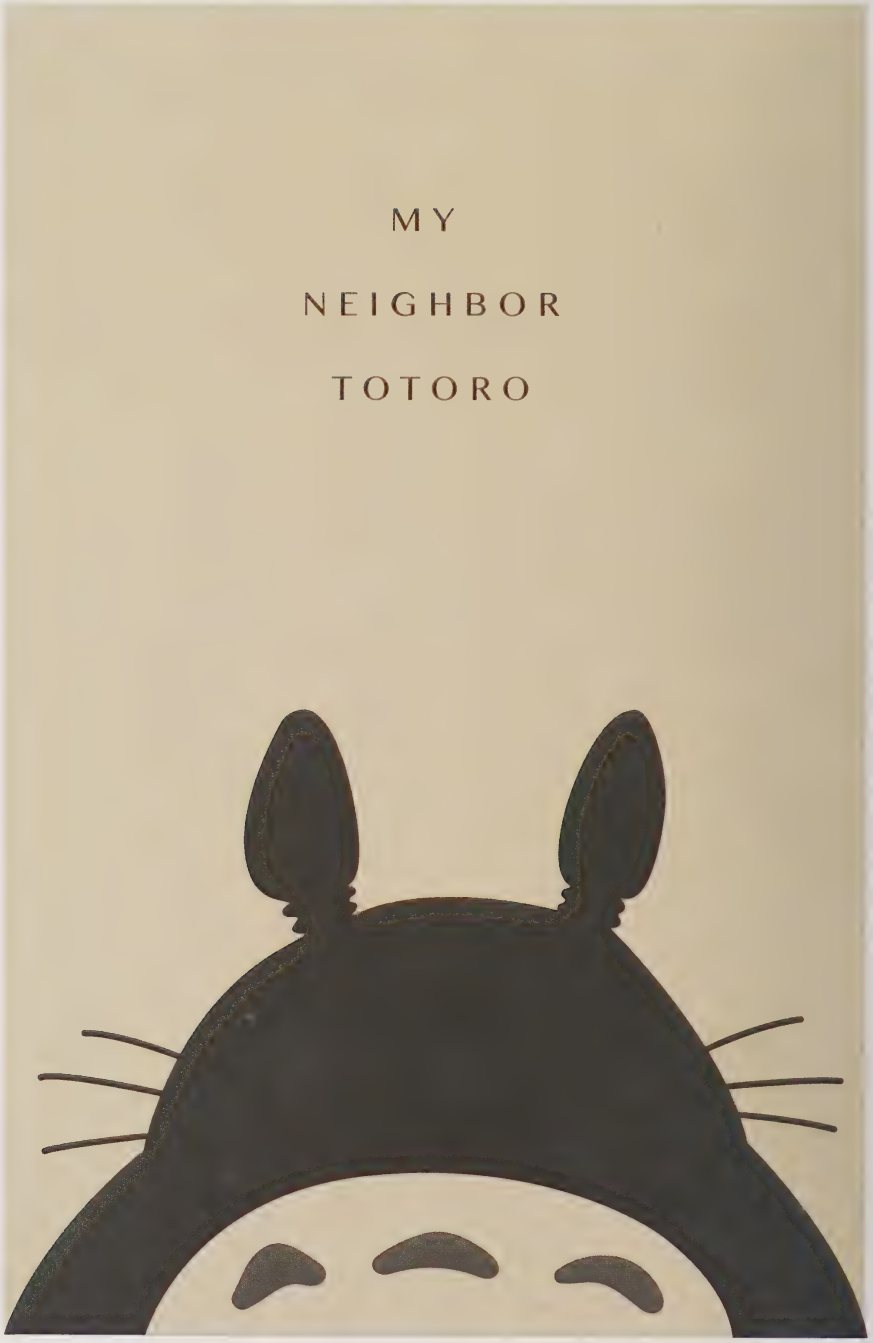


Dallas Buyers Club

Maria Lukashenok
Digital Art

The Lord of the Rings

Emily Walter
Digital Art



My Neighbor Totoro

Emilie Noyer
Digital Art

Red-Tailed Hawk at Freedom Park

Finian Curran
Photography

That One Guy From Mandalore

Allison Morton
Colored pencil

The Lighthouse

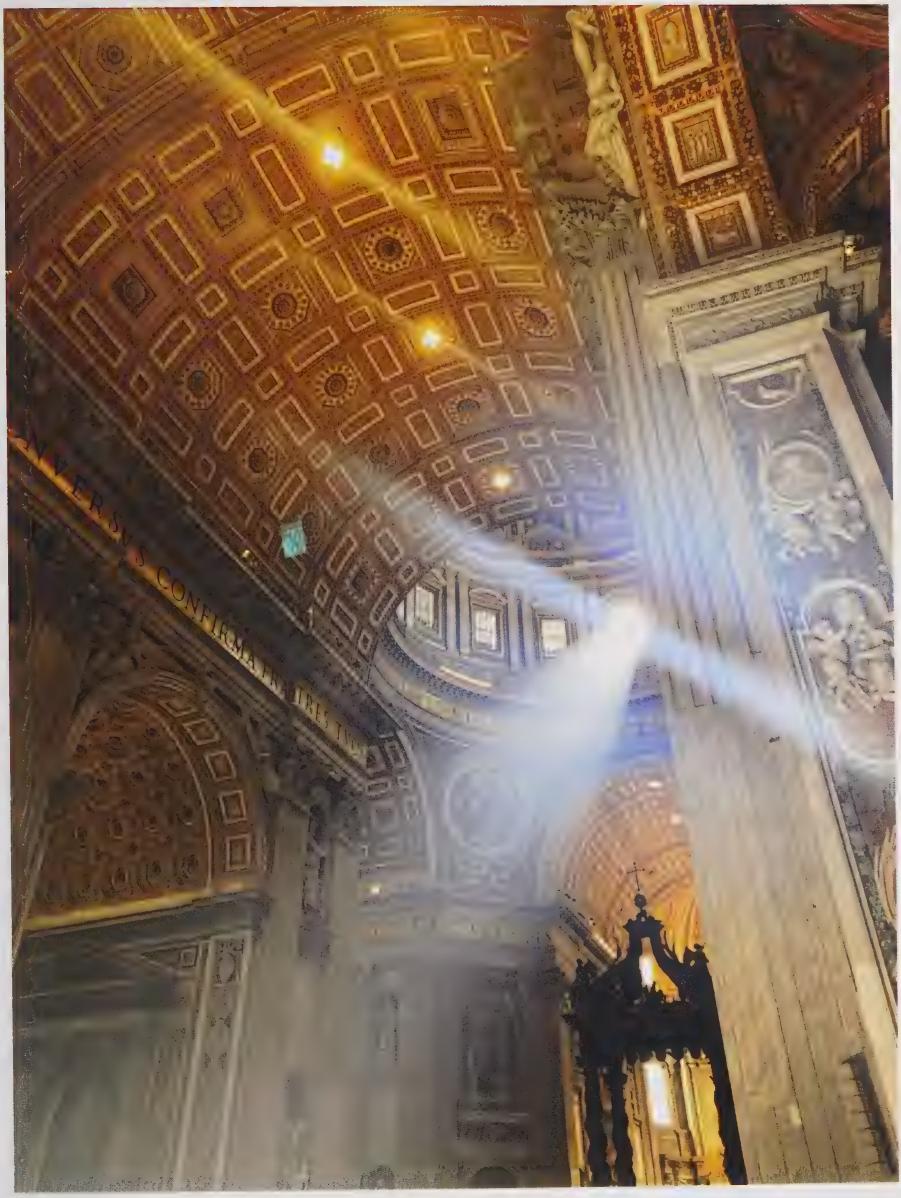
Mia Manuel
Woodcut Print

Green Heron Flying

Finian Curran
Photography

Best Hike Ever

Sophia Russano
Photography



Gateway

Jenna Plaisted
Photography

Scorpion

Autumn Pointe
Woodcut Print

Two Cedar Waxwings Arguing While the Third Drinks Water

Finian Curran
Photogrpahy

Juvenile Yellow Crowned Night Heron

Finian Curran
Photography

MUSIC & MULTIMEDIA

Spring Time Adventures

Ian Rosenberg
Electronic Music Composition

Back Cover:
Woodcut Self Portrait
by Madison Webster

Front Cover:
A Boy and His Crow
by Kennedy Riddick

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